

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

APRIL, 1870.

Put Yourself in His Place.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.



MEANTIME the history of Baby House was the history of what French dramatists call "a pious lie."

Its indirect effect in keeping Grace Carden apart both from Mrs. Little and Jael Dence was unforeseen and disastrous; its immediate and direct effect on Mrs. Little was encouraging to those concerned: what with the reconciliation to her brother, the return to native air and beloved scenes, the tenderness and firmness of Jael Dence, and the conviction that her son was safe out of the clutches of the dreaded Unions, she picked up flesh and colour and spirit weekly.

By-and-by she turned round upon Jael Dence, and the nurse became the pupil. Mrs. Little taught her grammar, pronunciation, dancing, carriage and deportment. Jael could already sing from notes; Mrs. Little taught her to accompany herself on the pianoforte. The teacher was so vigilant, and the pupil so apt and attentive, that surprising progress was made. To be sure they were together night and day.

This labour of love occupied Mrs. Little's mind agreeably, and, as the
VOL. XXI.—NO. 124. 19.

pupil was equally resolute in making the teacher walk or ride on horse-back with her every day, the hours glided swiftly, and, to Mrs. Little, pleasantly.

Her brother rather avoided her, by order of Jael Dence; but so many probable reasons were given for his absences, that she suspected nothing. Only she said one day, "What a gad-about he is now. This comes of not marrying. We must find him a wife."

When he was at home they breakfasted together, all three, and then Mrs. Little sometimes spoke of Henry, and so hopefully and cheerfully, that a great qualm ran through her hearers, and Raby, who could not command his features so well as Jael could, looked gloomy, and sometimes retired behind his newspaper.

Mrs. Little observed this one day and pointed it out to Jael. "Oh," said Jael, "take no notice. You know he wanted Mr. Henry to stay quietly here and be his heir."

"And so did I. But his very name seems to——"

"He likes him well for all that, ma'am; only he won't own it yet. You know what Squire is."

"*The Squire* you should say, dear. But '*Mr. Raby*' is better still. As a rule, avoid all small titles: the Doctor, the Squire, the Baronet, the Mayor."

Jael seized this handle, and, by putting questions to her teacher, got her away from the dangerous topic.

Ever on the watch, and occupied in many ways with Mrs. Little, Jael began to recover resignation; but this could not be without an occasional paroxysm of grief.

These she managed to hide from Mrs. Little.

But one day that lady surprised her crying. She stood and looked at her a moment, then sat down quietly beside her and took her hand. Jael started and feared discovery.

"My child," said Mrs. Little, "if you have lost a father you have gained a mother; and then, as to your sister, why my Henry is gone to the very same country; yet, you see, I do not give way to sorrow. As soon as he writes, I will beg him to make inquiries for Patty, and send them home if they are not doing well." Then Mrs. Little kissed Jael, and coaxed her and rocked with her, and Jael's tears began to flow, no longer for her own great grief, but for this mother, who was innocently consoling her, unconscious of the blow that must one day fall upon herself.

So matters went on pretty smoothly; only one morning, speaking of Henry, Mrs. Little surprised a look of secret intelligence between her brother and Jael Dence. She made no remark at the time, but she puzzled in secret over it, and began at last to watch the pair.

She asked Raby at dinner one day, when she might hope to hear from Henry.

"I don't know," said he, and looked at Jael Dence, like a person watching for orders.

Mrs. Little observed this, and turned keenly round to Jael.

"Oh," said Jael, "the Doctor—I beg pardon, Doctor Amboyne—can tell you that better than I can. It is a long way to Australia."

"How you send me from one to another," said Mrs. Little, speaking very slowly.

They made no reply to that, and Mrs. Little said no more. But she pondered all this. She wrote to Doctor Amboyne, and asked him why no letter had come from Henry.

Doctor Amboyne wrote back that, even if he had gone in a steamboat, there was hardly time for a letter to come back; but he had gone in a sailing vessel. "Give him three months and a half to get there, and two months for his letters to come back."

In this same letter he told her he was glad to hear she was renewing her youth like an eagle, but reminded her it would entail some consequences more agreeable to him than to her.

She laid down the letter with a blush and fell into a reverie.

Doctor Amboyne followed up this letter with a visit or two, and urged her to keep her promise and marry him.

She had no excuse for declining; but she procrastinated; she did not like to marry without consulting Henry, or, at least, telling him by letter.

And whilst she was thus temporizing, events took place at Eastbank which ended by rudely disturbing the pious falsehood at Raby Hall.

That sequence of events began with the interview between Mr. Carden and Mr. Coventry at Woodbine Villa.

"Little had made a will. My own solicitor drew it, and holds it at this moment." This was the intelligence Coventry had to communicate.

"Very well; then now I shall know who is coming to the 'Gosshawk' for the five thousand pounds. That will be the next act of the comedy, you will see."

"Wait a moment. He leaves to Mrs. Little his own reversion to a sum of nineteen hundred pounds; in which she has already the life-interest: he gives a hundred pounds to his sweetheart Dence: all the rest of his estate, in possession, or expectation, he bequeaths to—Miss Carden."

"Good heavens!—Why then——" Mr. Carden could say no more, for astonishment.

"So," said Coventry, "if he is alive, she is the confederate who is to profit by the fraud; those five thousand pounds belong to her at this moment."

"Are you sure? Who is your authority?"

"A communicative clerk, who happens to be the son of a tenant of mine. The solicitor himself, I believe, chooses to doubt his client's decease. It is at his private request that horrible object is refused Christian burial."

"On what grounds, pray?"

"Legal grounds, I suppose; the man did not die regularly, and

according to precedent. He omitted to provide himself with two witnesses previously to being blown up. In a case of this kind we may safely put an old-fashioned attorney's opinion out of the question. What do *you* think? That is all I care to know."

"I don't know what to think now. But I foresee one thing: I shall be placed in rather an awkward position. I ought to defend the 'Gosshawk'; but I am not going to rob my own daughter of five thousand pounds, if it belongs to her honestly."

"Will you permit me to advise you?"

"Certainly, I shall be very much obliged; for really I don't see my way."

"Well, then, I think you ought to look into the matter carefully, but without prejudice. I have made some inquiries myself; I went down to the works, and begged the workmen, who knew Little, to examine the remains, and then come here and tell us their real opinion."

"Oh, to my mind, it all depends on the will. If that answers the description you give—Hum!"

Next morning they breakfasted together, and, during breakfast, two workmen called, and, at Coventry's request, were ushered into the room. They came to say they knew Mr. Little well, and felt sure that was his dead hand they had seen at the Town Hall. Coventry cross-examined them severely, but they stuck to their conviction; and this will hardly surprise the reader when I tell him the workmen in question were Cole and another, suborned by Coventry himself, to go through this performance.

Mr. Carden received the testimony readily, for the best of all reasons—he wanted to believe it.

But, when they were gone, he recurred to the difficulty of his position. Director of the "Gosshawk," and father to a young lady who had a claim of five thousand pounds on it, and that claim debateable, though, to his own mind, no longer doubtful.

Now Mr. Coventry had a great advantage over Mr. Carden here: he had studied this very situation profoundly for several hours; and at last had seen how much might be done with it.

He began by artfully complimenting Mr. Carden on his delicacy, but said Miss Carden must not be a loser by it. "Convince her, on other grounds, that the man is dead; encourage her to reward my devotion with her hand, and I will relieve you of everything disagreeable. Let us settle on Miss Carden, for her separate use, the five thousand pounds, and anything else derivable from Mr. Little's estate; but we must also settle my farm of Hindhope; for it shall never be said she took as much from that man as she did from me. Well, in due course I apply to the 'Gosshawk' for my wife's money. I am not bound to tell your Company it is not mine but hers: that is between you and me. But you really ought to write to London at once and withdraw the charge of fraud; you owe that piece of justice to Miss Carden, and to the memory of the deceased."

"That is true; and it will pave the way for the demand you propose to make on Mrs. Coventry's behalf. Well, you really are a true friend, as well as a true lover."

In short, he went back to Hillsborough resolved to marry his daughter to Coventry as soon as possible. Still following that gentleman's instructions, he withheld from Grace that Little had made a will in her favour. He knew her to be quite capable of refusing to touch a farthing of it, or to act as executrix. But he told her the workmen had identified the remains, and that other circumstances had also convinced him he had been unjust to a deceased person, which he regretted.

When her father thus retracted his own words, away went Grace's last faint hope that Henry lived; and now she must die for him, or live for others.

She thought of Jael Dence, and chose the latter.

Another burst or two of agony, and then her great aim and study appeared to be to forget herself altogether. She was full of attention for her father, and, whenever Mr. Coventry came, she laboured to reward him with kind words, and even with smiles; but they were sad ones.

As for Coventry, he saw, with secret exultation, that she was now too languid and hopeless, to resist the joint efforts of her father and himself, and that, some day or other, she must fall lifeless into his arms.

He said to himself, "It is only a question of time."

He was now oftener at the villa than at Hillsborough, and, with remarkable self-denial, adhered steadily to the line of soothing and unobtrusive devotion.

One morning at breakfast the post brought him a large envelope from Hillsborough. He examined it, and found a capital "L" in the corner of the envelope, which "L" was written by his man Lally, in compliance with secret instructions from his master.

Coventry instantly put the envelope into his pocket, and his hand began to shake so that he could hardly hold his cup to his lips. His agitation, however, was not noticed.

Directly after breakfast he strolled, with affected composure, into the garden, and sat down in a bower where he was safe from surprise, as the tangled leaves were not so thick but he could peep through them.

He undid his enclosure, and found three letters; two were of no importance; the third bore a foreign post-mark, and was addressed to Miss Carden in a handwriting, which he recognized at a glance as Henry Little's.

But, as this was not the first letter from Henry to Grace, which he had intercepted and read, perhaps I had better begin by saying a few words about the first.

Well, then, the letters with which Coventry swam the river on the night of the explosion were six, viz. to Mr. Bolt, to Doctor Amboyne, to Mr. Baynes, to Jael Dence, to Mrs. Little, and to Grace Carden. The letter to Grace Carden was short, but touching, full of devotion, hope, resolution,

and grief at parting. He told her he had come to take leave that afternoon, but she had been out, luckily; for he felt he ought to go, and must go, but how could he look at her and then leave her? This was the general purport, and expressed with such anguish and fortitude as might have melted a heart of marble.

The reader may have observed that, upon his rival's disappearance, Coventry was no happier. This letter was the secret cause. First, it showed him his rival was alive, and he had wasted a crime; secondly, it struck him with remorse, yet not with penitence; and to be full of remorse, yet empty of that true penitence which confesses or undoes the wrong, this is to be miserable.

But, as time rolled on, bringing the various events I have related, but no news of Little, Coventry began to think that young man must really have come to some untimely end.

From this pleasant dream he was now awakened by the second intercepted letter. It ran thus:—

“ Boston, U. S., June 20th.

“ MY OWN DEAR LOVE,—

“ It is now nine weeks since I left England, and this will be a fortnight more getting to you; that is a long time for you to be without news from me, and I sadly fear I have caused you great anxiety. Dearest, it all happened thus. Our train was delayed by an accident, and I reached Liverpool just in time to see the steam-packet move down the Mersey. My first impulse, of course, was to go back to Hillsborough; but a seaman, who saw my vexation, told me a fast schooner was on the point of sailing for Boston, U. S. My heart told me if I went back to Hillsborough, I should never make the start again. I summoned all my manhood to do the right thing for us both; and I got into the schooner, heaven knows how; and, when I got there, I hid my face for ever so many hours, till, by the pitching and tossing, I knew that I was at sea. Then I began to cry and blubber. I couldn't hold it any longer.

“ At such a time a kind word keeps the heart from breaking altogether; and I got some comfort from an old gentleman, a native of Boston: a grave old man he was, and pretty reserved with all the rest; but, seeing me in the depths of misery, he talked to me like a father, and I told him all my own history, and a little about you too,—at least, how I loved you, and why I had left England with a heavy heart.

“ We had a very long passage, not downright tempestuous, but contrary winds, and a stiff gale or two. Instead of twenty days, as they promised, we were six weeks at sea, and what with all the fighting and the threats—I had another letter signed with a coffin just before I left that beautiful town—and the irritation at losing so much time on the ocean, it all brought on a fever, and I have no recollection of leaving the boat. When I came to myself, I was in a house near Boston, belonging to the old gentleman I spoke of. He and his nieces nursed me, and now I am as well as ever, only rather weak.

"Mr. Ironside, that is his name, but it should be Mr. Goldheart, if I had the christening of him, he has been my good Samaritan. Dear Grace, please pray for him and his family every night. He tells me he comes of the pilgrim fathers, so he is bound to feel for pilgrims and wanderers from home. Well, he has been in patents a little, and, before I lost my little wits with the fever, he and I had many a talk. So now he is sketching out a plan of operation for me; and I shall have to travel many a hundred miles in this vast country. But they won't let me move till I am a little stronger, he and his nieces. If he is gold they are pearls.

"Dearest, it has taken me two days to write this; but I am very happy and hopeful, and do not regret coming. I am sure it was the right thing for us both.

"Please say something kind for me to the good doctor, and tell him I have got over this one trouble already.

"Dearest, I agreed to take so much a year from Bolt, and he must fight the trades alone; such a life is not worth having; Bayne won't wrong me of a shilling; whatever he makes, over his salary and the men's wages, there it will be for me, when I come home; so I write to no one at Hillsborough but you; indeed, you are my all in this world; I travel, and fight, and work, and breathe, and live for you, my own beloved, and if any harm came to you, I wouldn't care to live another moment."

At this point in the letter, the reader stopped, and something cold seemed to pass all through his frame. It struck him that all good men would pity the writer of this letter, and abhor him who kept it from that pale, heart-broken girl inside the cottage.

He sat freezing, with the letter in his hand, and began to doubt whether he could wade any deeper in crime.

After a minute or two he raised his head, and was about to finish reading the letter.

But, in the meantime, Grace Carden had resumed her accustomed place in the verandah. She lay upon the couch, and her pale face, and hollow, but still beautiful eyes, were turned seaward. Out of those great sad eyes, the sad soul looked across the waste of waters,—gazed, and searched, and pined in vain. Oh, it was a look to make angels weep, and hover close over her head with restless, loving pinions, longing to shadow, caress, and heal her.

Coventry, with Henry Little's letter in his hand, peered through the leaves, and saw the woman he loved fix this look of despair upon the sea,—despair, of which he was the sole cause, and could dispel it with a gesture.

"And this brings me back to what is my only great trouble now. I told you, in the letter I left behind me, you would hear from me in a month at farthest. It will be not a month but eleven weeks. Good heavens! when I think what anxiety you may have suffered on my account! You know I am a pupil of the good doctor, and so I put myself in your place, and I say to myself, 'If my Grace had promised to

write in a month, and eleven weeks had passed without a word, what would my feelings be ?' Why, I think I should go mad ; I should make sure you were ill ; I should fear you were dead ; I should fancy every terrible thing on earth, except that you were false to your poor Henry. That I should never fear : I judge you by myself. Fly steamboat with this letter to my love, and set her mind at ease. Fly back with a precious word from her dear hand, and, with that in my bosom, nothing will ever daunt me.

"God bless you ! Angel of my life, darling of my heart, star on which all my hopes are fixed ! Oh, what miserable bad tools words are ! When I look at them, and compare them with how I love you, I seem to be writing that I love you no more than other people love. What I feel is so much greater than words.

"Must I say farewell ? Even on paper, it is like tearing myself away from heaven again. But that was to be : and now this is to be. Good-by, my own beloved.

"Yours till death,

"HENRY."

Coventry read this, sentence by sentence, still looking up, nearly every sentence, at her, to whom it was addressed.

The letter pleaded on his knee, the pale face pleaded a few yards off ; he sat between the two bleeding lovers, their sole barrier and bane.

His heart began to fail him. The mountain of crime looked high. Now remorse stung him deeper than ever ; jealousy spurred him harder than ever ; a storm arose within his breast, a tempest of conflicting passion, as grand and wild as ever distracted the heart ; as grand and wild as any poet has ever tried to describe, and, half succeeding, won immortal fame.

"See what I can do !" whispered conscience. "With one bound I can give her the letter, and bring the colour back to that cheek and joy to that heart. She will adore me for it, she will be my true and tender friend till death. She will weep upon my neck and bless me."

"Ay," whispered jealousy, "and then she will marry Henry Little."

"And am I sure to succeed if I persist in crime ? Deserve her hatred and contempt, and is it certain they will not both fall on me ?"

"The fault began with them. He supplanted me—she jilted me. I hate him—I love her. I can't give her up now ; I have gone too far. What is intercepting a letter ? I have been too near murder to stop at that."

"But her pale face ! her pale face !"

"Once married, supplant him as he has supplanted you. Away to Italy with her. Fresh scenes—constant love—the joys of wedlock ! What will this Henry Little be to her then ?—a dream."

"Eternal punishment ! if it is not a fable, who has ever earned it better than I am earning it if I go on ?"

"It is a fable; it must be. Philosophers always said so, and now even divines have given it up."

"Her pale face! her pale face! Never mind *him*, look at *her*. What sort of love is this that shows no pity? Oh, my poor girl, don't look so sad—so pale! What shall I do? Would to God I had never been born, to torture myself and her."

His good angel fought hard for him that day; fought and struggled and hoped, until the miserable man, torn this way and that, ended the struggle with a blasphemous yell by tearing the letter to atoms.

That fatal act turned the scale.

The next moment he wished he had not done it.

But it was too late. He could not go to her with the fragments. She would see he had intercepted it purposely.

Well, all the better. It was decided. He would not look at her face any more. He could not bear it.

He rushed away from the bower and made for the seaside; but he soon returned another way, gained his own room, and there burnt the fragments of the letter to ashes.

But, though he was impenitent, remorse was not subdued. He could not look Grace Carden in the face now. So he sent word he must go back to Hillsborough directly.

He packed his bag and went downstairs with it.

On the last landing he met Grace Carden. She started a little.

"What! going away?"

"Yes, Miss Carden."

"No bad news, I hope," said she, kindly.

The kindly tone coming from her, to whom he had shown no mercy, went through that obdurate heart,

"No—no," he faltered; "but the sight of your unhappiness—Let me go. I am a miserable man."

And with this he actually burst out crying and ran past her.

Grace told her father, and asked him to find out what was the matter with Mr. Coventry.

Mr. Carden followed Coventry to the station, and Coventry, who had now recovered his self-possession and his cunning, told him that for some time Miss Carden had worn a cheerful air, which had given him hopes; but this morning, watching her from a bower in the garden, he had seen such misery in her face that it had quite upset him; and he was going away to try and recover that composure, without which he felt he would be no use to her in any way.

This tale Carden brought back to his daughter, and she was touched by it. "Poor Mr. Coventry," said she. "Why does he waste so much love on me?"

Her father, finding her thus softened, pleaded hard for his friend, and reminded Grace that she had not used him well. She admitted that at once, and went so far as to say that she felt bound never to marry any

one but Mr. Coventry, unless time should cure him, as she hoped it would, of his unfortunate attachment.

From this concession Mr. Carden urged her daily to another, viz. that Mr. Coventry might be permitted to try and win her affection.

Her answer was, "He had much better content himself with what I can and do give him: my esteem and gratitude and sincere pity."

Mr. Carden, however, persisted, and the deep affection he had shown his daughter gave him great power. It was two against one; and the two prevailed.

Mr. Coventry began to spend his whole time at Eastbank Cottage.

He followed Grace about with a devotion to which no female heart could be entirely insensible; and, at last, she got used to him, and rather liked to have him about her. He broke her solitude as a dog does, and he fetched and carried for her, and talked when she was inclined to listen, and was silent when he saw his voice jarred upon her bereaved heart.

Without her father, matters might have gone on so for years; but Mr. Carden had now so many motives for marrying his daughter to Coventry, that he used all his judgment and all his influence. He worked on his daughter's pride, her affection, her sense of honour, and her sense of duty.

She struggled, she sighed, she wept; but, by little and little, she submitted. And, since three months more passed with no striking event, I will deviate from my usual custom and speak a little of what passed in her mind.

First of all, then, she was so completely deceived by appearances, that she believed the exact opposite of the truth in each particular. To her not only did black seem white, but white black. Her dead lover had given her but half his heart. Her living lover was the soul of honour and true devotion. It was her duty, though not her pleasure, to try and love him; to marry him would be a good and self-denying action.

And what could she lose, by it? Her own chance of happiness was gone. All she could hope for hereafter was the gentle satisfaction that arises from making others happy. She had but a choice of evils: never to marry at all, or to marry Frederick Coventry.

Thus far she was conscious of her own feelings, and could, perhaps, have put them into words; but here she drifted out of her depth.

Nature implants in women a genuine love of offspring that governs them unconsciously. It governs the unconscious child; it governs the half-conscious mother who comes home from the toyshop with a waxen child for her girl, and a drum for her boy.

Men desire offspring—when they desire it at all—from vanity alone. Women desire it from pure love of it.

This instinct had probably its share in withholding Grace from making up her mind never to marry; and so operated negatively, though not positively, in Coventry's favour.

And so, by degrees and in course of time, after saying "no" a dozen

times, she said "yes" once in a moment of utter lassitude, and afterwards she cried and wished to withdraw her consent, but they were two to one, and had right on their side she thought.

They got her to say she would marry him some day or other.

Coventry intercepted several letters, but he took care not to read them with Grace's sad face in sight. He would not give conscience such a power to torment him. The earlier letters gave him a cruel satisfaction. They were written each from a different city in the United States, and all tended to show that the writer had a year or two to travel yet, before he could hope to return home in triumph and marry his Grace.

In all these letters she was requested to send her answers to New York, (and, now I think of it, there was a postscript to that effect in the very letter I have given in extenso.)

But at last came a letter that disturbed this delightful dream. It was written from the western extremity of the States, but the writer was in high spirits; he had sold his patents in two great cities, and had established them in two more on a royalty; he had also met with an unexpected piece of good fortune: his railway clip had been appreciated, a man of large capital and enterprise had taken it up with spirit, and was about to purchase the American and Canadian right for a large sum down and a percentage. As soon as this contract should be signed he should come home and claim Mr. Carden's promise. He complained a little that he got no letters, but concluded the post-office authorities were in fault, for he had written to New York to have them forwarded; however, he should soon be in that city and revel in them.

This troubled Coventry, and drove him to extremities. He went on his knees to Grace, and implored her to name the day.

She drew back with horror and repugnance; said, with a burst of tears, she was a widow, and would not marry till a decent time had elapsed since—; then, with sudden doggedness, "I will never marry at all."

And so she left him to repent his precipitation.

He was at his wit's end, and could do nothing but look unhappy, and temporize, and hope the wind might change.

The wind did not change, and he passed a week or two of outward sorrow, but inward rage.

He fell ill, and Mr. Carden pitied him openly.

Grace maintained a sullen silence.

One day, as he was in bed, an envelope was brought him, with a large "L." He opened it slowly, fearing the worst.

The letter was full of love, and joy, and triumph, that made the reader's heart faint within him, till he came to this sentence:—

"The gentleman who treats with me for the railway clip, makes it an express stipulation that I shall spend a month in his works at Chicago,

superintending the forging and perfecting of the clip. As he intends to be there himself, and to buy it out and out if it answers his expectations, I shall certainly go, and wear a smith's apron once more for your sake. He is even half inclined to go into another of my projects—the forging of large axes by machinery. It was tried at Hillsborough two years ago, but the Union sent a bullet through the manufacturer's hat, and he dropped it."

The letter, from which I give this extract, was a reprieve. He had five or six weeks before him still.

Soon after this, his faithful ally, Mr. Carden, worked on Grace's pity; and as Coventry never complained, nor irritated her in any way, she softened to him. Then all the battery of imploring looks was brought to bear on her by Coventry, and of kind admonition and entreaty by her father; and so, between them, they gently thrust her down the slope.

"Stop all their tongues," said Mr. Carden. "Come back to Hillsborough a wife. I gave up my choice to yours once. Now give me my way. I am touched to the heart by this young man's devotion: he invites me to live with him when you are married. What other young fellow would show me so much mercy?"

"Does he?" said Grace. "I will try and reward him for that, and for speaking well of one who could not defend himself. But give me a little time."

Mr. Carden conveyed this to Coventry with delight, and told him he should only have another month or so to wait. Coventry received this at first with unmixed exultation, but by and by he began to feel superstitious. Matters were now drawing to such a point that Little might very well arrive before the wedding-day, and just before it. Perhaps heaven had that punishment in store for him; the cup was to be in his very grasp, and then struck out of it.

Only a question of time! But what is every race? The space between winner and loser strikes the senses more obviously; but the race is just as much a question of time as of space. Buridan runs second for the Derby, defeated by a length. But give Buridan a start of one second, and he shall beat the winner—by two lengths.

Little now wrote from Chicago that everything was going on favourably, and he believed it would end in a sale of the patent clip in the United States and Canada for 50,000 dollars, but no royalty.

This letter was much shorter than any of the others; and, from that alone, his guilty reader could see that the writer intended to follow it in person almost immediately.

Coventry began almost to watch the sun in his course. When it was morning he wished it was evening, and when it was evening he wished it was morning.

Sometimes he half wondered to see how calmly the sun rose and set, and Nature pursued her course, whilst he writhed in the agony of suspense, and would gladly have given a year out of his life for a day.

At last, by Mr. Carden's influence, the wedding-day was fixed. But soon after this great triumph came another intercepted letter. He went to his room, and his hands trembled violently as he opened it.

His eye soon fixed on this passage:—

"I thought to be in New York by this time, and looking homewards; but I am detained by another piece of good fortune, if anything can be called good fortune that keeps me a day from you. Oh, my dear Grace, I am dying to see your handwriting at New York, and then fly home and see your dear self, and never, never quit you more. I have been wonderfully lucky; I have made my fortune, our fortune. But it hardly pays me for losing the sight of you so many months. But what I was going to tell you is that my method of forging large axes by machinery is wonderfully praised, and a great firm takes it up on fair terms. This firm has branches in various parts of the world, and, once my machines are in full work, Hillsborough will never forge another axe. Man cannot suppress machinery; the world is too big. That bullet sent through Mr. Tyler's hat loses Great Britain a whole trade. I profit in money by their short-sighted violence, but I must pay the price; for this will keep me another week at Chicago, perhaps ten days. Then home I come, with lots of money to please your father, and an ocean of love for you, who don't care about the filthy dross; no more do I, except as the paving-stones on the road to you and heaven, my adored one."

The effect of this letter was prodigious. So fearful had been the suspense, so great was now the relief, that Coventry felt exultant, buoyant. He went down to the seaside, and walked, light as air, by the sands, and his brain teemed with delightful schemes. Little would come to Hillsborough soon after the marriage; but what of that? On the wedding-night he would be at Dover. Next day at Paris, on his way to Rome, Athens, Constantinople. The inevitable exposure should never reach his wife until he had so won her, soul and body, that she should adore him for the crimes he had committed to win her,—he knew the female heart to be capable of that.

He came back from his walk another man, colour in his cheek, and fire in his eye.

He walked into the drawing-room, and found Mr. Raby, with his hat on, just leaving Grace, whose eyes showed signs of weeping.

"I wish you joy, sir," said Raby. "I am to have the honour of being at your wedding."

"It will add to my happiness, if possible," said Coventry.

To be as polite in deed as in word, he saw Mr. Raby into the fly.

"Curious creatures these girls," said Raby, shrugging his shoulders.

"She was engaged to me long ago," said Coventry, parrying the blow.

"Ah! I forgot that. Still—well, well; I wish you joy."

He went off, and Coventry returned to Grace. She was seated by the window, looking at the sea.

"What did Godpapa say to you?"

"Oh, he congratulated me. He reminded me you and I were first engaged at his house."

"Did he tell you it is to be at Woodbine Villa?"

"What?"

"The wedding." And Grace blushed to the forehead at having to mention it.

"No, indeed, he did not mention any such thing, or I should have shown him how inadvisable——"

"You mistake me. It is *I* who wish to be married from my father's house, by good old Doctor Fynes. He married my parents, and he christened me, and now he shall marry me."

"I approve that, of course, since you wish it; but, my own dearest Grace, Woodbine Villa is associated with so many painful memories—let me advise, let me earnestly entreat you, not to select it as the place to be married from. Dr. Fynes can be invited here."

"I have set my heart on it," said Grace. "Pray do not thwart me in it."

"I should be very sorry to thwart you in anything. But, before you finally decide, pray let me try and convince your better judgment."

"I *have* decided; and I have written to Doctor Fynes, and to the few persons I mean to invite; they can't all come here; and I have asked Mr. Raby; and it is my own desire; and it is one of those things the lady and her family always decide. I have no wish to be married at all. I only marry to please my father and you. There, let us say no more about it, please. I will not be married at Woodbine Villa, nor anywhere else. I wish papa and you would show your love by burying me instead."

These words, and the wild and panting way they were uttered in, brought Coventry to his knees in a moment. He promised her, with abject submission, that she should have her own way in this and everything. He petted her, and soothed her, and she forgave him, but so little graciously, that he saw she would fly out in a moment again, if the least attempt were made to shake her resolution.

Grace talked the matter over with Mr. Carden, and that same evening he begged Coventry to leave the Villa as soon as he conveniently could, for he and his daughter must be there a week before the wedding, and invite some relations, whom it was his interest to treat with respect.

"You will spare me a corner," said Coventry, in his most insinuating tone. "Dear Woodbine! I could not bear to leave it."

"Oh, of course you can stay there till we actually come; but we can't have the bride and bridegroom under one roof. Why, my dear fellow, you know better than that."

There was no help for it. It sickened him with fears of what might

happen in those few fatal days, during which Mr. Carden, Grace herself, and a household over which he had no control, would occupy the house, and would receive the postman, whose very face showed him incorruptible.

He stayed till the last moment; stopped a letter of five lines from Little, in which he said he should be in New York very soon, en route for England; and the very next day he received the Cardens, with a smiling countenance, and a fainting heart, and then vacated the premises. He ordered Lally to hang about the Villa at certain hours when the post came in, and do his best. But this was catching at a straw. His real hope was that neither Little himself, nor a letter in his handwriting, might come in that short interval.

It wanted but five days to the wedding.

Hitherto, it had been a game of skill,—now it was a game of chance; and every morning he wished it was evening, every evening he wished it was morning.

The day Raby came back from Eastbank, he dined at home, and, in an unguarded moment, said something or other, on which Mrs. Little cross-examined him so swiftly and so keenly, that he stammered, and let out Grace Carden was on the point of marriage.

"Marriage, while my son is alive!" said Mrs. Little, and looked from him to Jael Dence, at first with amazement, and afterwards with a strange expression, that showed her mind was working.

A sort of vague alarm fell upon the other two: and they waited, in utter confusion, for what might follow.

But the mother was not ready to suspect so horrible a thing as her son's death. She took a more obvious view, and inveighed bitterly against Grace Carden.

She questioned Raby as to the cause; but it was Jael who answered her. "I believe nobody knows the rights of it, but Miss Carden herself."

"The cause is her utter fickleness: but she never really loved him. My poor Henry!"

"Oh yes, she did," said Raby. "She was at death's door a few months ago."

"At death's door for one man, and now going to marry another!"

"Why not?" said Raby, hard pushed; "she is a woman."

"And why did you not tell me till now?" asked Mrs. Little, loftily ignoring her brother's pitiable attempt at a sneer.

Raby's reply to this was happier.

"Why, what the better are you for knowing it now? We had orders not to worry you unnecessarily. Had we not, Jael?"

"That is all very well, in some things. But, where my son is concerned, pray never keep the truth from me again. When did she break off with Henry? or did he quarrel with her?"

"I have no idea. I was not in the country."

"Do you know, dear?"

"No, Mrs. Little. But I am of your mind. I think she could not have loved Mr. Henry as she ought."

"When did you see her last?"

"I could not say justly: but it was a long while ago."

Mrs. Little interpreted this that Jael had quarrelled with Grace for her fickleness, and gave her a look of beaming affection; then fell into a dead silence, and soon tears were seen stealing down her cheek.

"But I shall write to her," said she, after a long and painful silence.

Mr. Raby hoped she would do nothing of the kind.

"Oh! I shall not say much. I shall put her one question. Of course *she* knows why they part."

Next morning Jael Dence asked Mr. Raby whether the threatened letter must be allowed to go.

"Of course it must," said Raby. "I have gone as far off the straight path as a gentleman can. And I wish we may not repent our ingenuity. Deceive a mother about her son! what can justify it after all?"

Mrs. Little wrote her letter, and showed it to Jael:—

"DEAR MISS CARDEN, — They tell me you are about to be married. Can this be true, and Henry Little alive?"

An answer came back, in due course:—

"DEAR MRS. LITTLE,—It is true: and I am miserable. Forgive me, and forget me."

Mrs. Little discovered the marks of tears upon the paper, and was sorely puzzled.

She sat silent a long time: then, looking up, she saw Jael Dence gazing at her with moist eyes and an angelic look of anxiety and affection.

She caught her round the neck, and kissed her, almost passionately.

"All the better," she cried, struggling with a sob. "I shall have my own way for once. You shall be my daughter instead."

Jael returned her embrace with ardour, but in silence, and with averted head.

When Jael Dence heard that Grace Carden was in Hillsborough, she felt very much drawn to go and see her: but she knew the meeting must be a sad one to them both; and that made her put it off till the very day before the wedding. Then, thinking it would be too unkind if she held entirely aloof, and being, in truth, rather curious to know whether Grace had really been able to transfer her affections in so short a time, she asked Mr. Raby's leave, and drove one of the ponies in to Woodbine Villa.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE short interval previous to the wedding-day passed, to all appearance, as that period generally does. Settlements were drawn, and only awaited signature. The bride seemed occupied with dress, and receiving visits and presents, and reading and writing letters of that sort which ought to be done by machinery.

The bridegroom hovered about the house, running in and out on this or that pretext.

She received his presence graciously, read him the letters of her female friends, and forced herself to wear a look of languid complacency, especially before others.

Under all this routine she had paroxysms of secret misery; and he was in tortures.

These continued until the eve of the wedding, and then he breathed freely. No letter had come from the U. S., and to-morrow was the wedding-day. The chances were six to one no letter came that day, and, even if one should, he had now an excuse ready for keeping Lally on the premises that particular morning. At one o'clock he would be flying south with his bride.

He left the villa to dress for dinner. During this interval, Jael Dence called.

The housemaid knocked at Grace's door—she was dressing—and told her Jael wished to see her.

Grace was surprised and much disturbed. It flashed on her, in a moment, that this true and constant lover of Henry Little had come to enjoy her superiority; she herself had greatly desired this meeting, once; but now it could only serve to mortify her. The very thought that this young woman was near her set her trembling; but she forced herself to appear calm, and, turning to her maid, said, "Tell her I can see no one to-day."

The lady's-maid gave this message to the other servant, and she went downstairs with it.

The message, however, had not been gone long when the desire to put a question to Jael Dence returned strongly upon Grace Carden.

She yielded to an uncontrollable impulse, and sent her maid down to say that she would speak to Jael Dence, in her bedroom, the last thing at night.

"The last thing at night!" said Jael, colouring with indignation; "and where am I to find a bed after that?"

"Oh," said the late footman, now butler, "you shall not leave the house. I'll manage that for you with the housekeeper."

At half-past eleven o'clock that night, Grace dismissed her maid, and told her to bring Jael Dence to her.

Jael came, and they confronted each other once more.

"You can go," said Grace to the maid.

They were alone, and eyed each other strangely.

"Sit down," said Grace, coldly.

"No, thank you," said Jael, firmly. "I shall not stay long after the way I have been received."

"And how did you expect to be received?"

"As I used to be. As a poor girl who once saved *his* life, and nearly lost her own, through being his true and faithful servant."

"Faithful to him, but not to me."

Jael's face showed she did not understand this.

"Yes," said Grace, bitterly, "you are the real cause of my marrying Mr. Coventry, whom I don't love, and never can love. There, read that. I can't speak to you. You look all candour and truth; but I know what you are; all the women in that factory knew about you and him—read that." She handed her the anonymous letter, and watched her like an eagle.

Jael read the poison, and coloured a little; but was not confounded.

"Do you believe this, Miss Carden?"

"I did not believe it, at first; but too many people have confirmed it. Your own conduct has confirmed it, my poor girl. This is cruel of me."

"Never mind," said Jael, resolutely. "We have gone too far to stop. My conduct! What conduct, if you please?"

"They all say that, when you found he was no more, you attempted self-destruction."

"Ah!" cried Jael, like a wounded hare; "they must tell you that!" and she buried her face in her hands.

Now this was a young woman endowed by nature with great composure, and a certain sobriety and weight; so, when she gave way like that, it produced a great effect on those who knew her.

Grace sighed, and was distressed. But there was no help for it now. She awaited Jael's reply, and Jael could not speak for some time. She conquered her agitation, however, at last, and said, in a low voice,—
"Suppose you had a sister, whom you loved dearly—and then you had a quarrel with her, and neither of you much to blame, the fault lay with a third person; and suppose you came home suddenly, and found that sister had left England in trouble, and gone to the other end of the world—would not that cut you to the heart?"

"Indeed it would. How correctly you speak. Now who has been teaching you?"

"Mrs. Little."

"Ah!"

"You *have* a father. Suppose you left him for a month, and then came back and found him dead and buried—think of that—buried!"

"Poor girl!"

"And all this to fall on a poor creature just off a sick bed, and scarcely right in her head. When I found poor Mr. Henry was dead,

and you at Death's door, I crawled home for comfort, and there I found desolation : my sister gone across the sea, my father in the churchyard. I wandered about all night, with my heavy heart, and distraught brain, and at last they found me in the river : they may say I threw myself in, but it is my belief I swooned away and fell in. I wouldn't swear though, for I remember nothing of it. What does it prove against me ? ”

“ Not much, indeed; by itself. But they all say you were shut up with him for hours.”

“ And that is true ; ten hours, every day. He was at war with these trades, and his own workman had betrayed him ; he knew I was as strong as a man at some kinds of work,—of course I can't strike blows, and hurt people, like a man,—so he asked me, would I help him grind saws with his machine on the sly, clandestinely I mean. Well, I did, and very easy work it was, child's play to me that had wrought on a farm : he gave me six pounds a week for it. That's all the harm we did together ; and, as for what we said, let me tell you a first-rate workman, like poor Mr. Henry, works very silently ; that is where they beat us women. I am sure we often ground a dozen saws, and not a word, except upon the business. When we did talk, it was sure to be about you. Poor lad, the very last time we wrought together, I mind he said, ‘ Well done, Jael, that's good work ; it brings me an inch nearer *her*. ’ And I said, All the better, and I'd give him another hour or two every day if he liked. That very evening I took him his tea at seven o'clock. He was writing letters ; one was to you. He was just addressing it. ‘ Good-night, Jael, ’ said he. ‘ You have been a good friend to her and me. ’ ”

“ Oh ! did he say that ? What became of that letter ? ”

“ Upon my soul he did : ay, and it was his last word to me in this world. But you are not of his mind, it seems. The people in the factory ! I know they used to say we were sweethearts ; you can't wonder at that ; they didn't know about you, nor any of our secrets ; and, of course, vulgar folk like them could not guess the sort of affection I had for poor Mr. Henry ; but a lady like you should not go by their lights. Besides, I was always open with you. Once I had a different feeling for him : did I hide it from you ? When I found he loved you, I set to work to cure myself ; I did cure myself, before your very eyes ; and, after that, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to go and doubt me. There now, I have made her cry.”

Her own voice faltered a moment, and she said, with gentle dignity, “ Well, I forgive you, for old kindness past ; but I shall not sleep under this roof now. God bless you, and give you many happy days yet with this gentleman you are going to marry. Farewell.”

She was actually going ; but Grace caught her by the arm. “ No, no, you shall not leave me so.”

“ Ay, but I will.” And Jael's eyes, so mild in general, began to sparkle with anger, at being detained against her will ; but, generous to the last, she made no use of her great strength to get clear from Grace.

"You will not go, if you are the woman you were. I believe your words, I believe your honest face, I implore your forgiveness. I am the most miserable creature in this world. Pray do not abandon me."

This appeal, made with piteous gestures, and streaming eyes, overpowered Jael Dence, and soon they were seated, rocking together, and Grace pouring out her heart.

Jael then learned, to her dismay, that Grace's belief in Henry's falsehood was a main cause of this sudden marriage. Had she believed her Henry true, she would have mourned him, as a widow, two years at least.

The unhappy young lady lamented her precipitation; and the idea of marrying Mr. Coventry to-morrow became odious to her. She asked Jael wildly, whether she should not be justified in putting an end to her life.

Jael consoled her all she could; and, at her request, slept in the same bed with her. Indeed she was afraid to leave her; for she was wild at times, and said she would prefer to be married to that dead hand people said was at the Town Hall, and then thrown into one grave with it. "That's the bridal I long for," said she.

In the morning she was calmer, and told Jael she thought she was doing right.

"I shall be neither more nor less wretched for marrying this poor man," said she: "and I shall make two people happy; two people that deserve the sacrifice I make."

So, after all, the victim went calmly.

Early in the morning came a letter from Doctor Fynes. He was confined by gout, and sorry to say the ceremony he had hoped to perform, must be done by his curate.

Now this curate was quite a stranger to Grace, and indeed to most people in Hillsborough. Doctor Fynes himself knew nothing about him except that he had come in answer to his inquiry for a curate, had brought good letters of recommendation, and had shown himself acquainted with the learned doctor's notes to *Apollonius Rhodius*; on which several grounds the doctor, who was himself a better scholar than a priest, had made him his curate, and had heard no complaints, except from a few unitanical souls; these he looked on as barbarians, and had calmly ignored them and their prejudices, ever since he transferred his library from St. John's College Cambridge to St. Peter's Rectory, and that was thirty years ago!

This sudden substitute of an utter stranger for Doctor Fynes afflicted Grace Carden not a little, and her wedding-day began with a tear or two on that account. But, strange as it may appear, she lived to alter her mind, and to thank and bless Mr. Beresford for taking her old friend's place on that great occasion.

But, while the bride dressed for church, and her bridesmaids and friends drove up, events were taking place, to deal with which I must retrograde a step.

Jael Dence having gone to "Woodbine Villa," Mrs. Little and her brother dined tête-à-tête; and the first question she asked was, "Why, where is Jael?"

"Don't you know? gone to 'Woodbine Villa.' The wedding is to-morrow."

"What, my Jael gone to that girl's wedding!" And her eyes flashed with ire.

"Why not? I am going to it myself."

"I am sorry to hear you say so; very sorry."

"Why, she is my godchild. Would you have me affront her?"

"If she is your godchild, Henry is your nephew."

"Of course, and I did all I could to marry him to Grace: but, you see, he would be wiser than me."

"Dear Guy, my poor Henry was to blame, for not accepting your generous offer: but that does not excuse this heartless, fickle girl."

Raby's sense of justice began to revolt. "My dear Edith, I can't bear to hear you speak so contemptuously of this poor girl, who has so nearly died for love of your son; she is one of the noblest, purest, most unselfish creatures I ever knew. Why judge so hastily? But that is the way with you ladies: it must be the woman who is in the wrong. Men are gods, and women devils; that is your creed."

"Is *Henry* going to marry another?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then what excuse can there be for her conduct? Does wrong become right, when this young lady does it? It is you who are prejudiced, not I. Her conduct is without excuse. I have written to her: she has replied, and has offered me no excuse. 'Forgive me,' she says, 'and forget me.' I shall never forgive her; and you must permit me to despise her for a few years before I forget her."

"Well, don't excite yourself so: my poor Edith, some day or other you will be sorry you ever said a word against that amiable and most unfortunate girl."

He said this so sadly and solemnly that Mrs. Little's anger fell directly, and they both sat silent a long time.

"Guy," said Mrs. Little, "tell me the truth. Has my son done anything wrong—anything rash? It was strange he should leave England without telling me. He told Doctor Amboyne. Oh, there is some mystery here! If I did not know you so well, I should say there is some deceit going on in this house. There *is*—You hang your head. I cannot bear to give you pain, so I will ask you no more questions. But——"

There was a world of determination in that "but."

She retired early to bed; to bed, but not to rest.

In the silence of the night she recalled every thing, every look, every word that had seemed a little strange to her, and put them all together.

She could not sleep, vague misgivings crawled over her agitated mind ; at length she slumbered from sheer exhaustion. She rose early ; yet, when she came downstairs, Raby was just starting for Woodbine Villa.

Mrs. Little asked him to take her into Hillsborough. He looked uneasy, but complied ; and, at her desire, set her down in the marketplace of Hillsborough. As soon as he was out of sight she took a fly, and directed the driver to take her to Mr. Little's works. "I mean," said she, "the works where Mr. Bayne is."

She found Mr. Bayne in his counting-house, dressed in deep mourning.

He started at sight of her, and then she saw his eye fall with surprise on her grey dress.

"Mr. Bayne," said she, "I am come to ask you a question or two."

"Be seated, madam," said Bayne, reverently. "I expected a visit from you or from your agent ; and the accounts are all ready for your inspection. I keep them as clear as possible."

"I do not come here about accounts. My son has perfect confidence in you, and so have I."

"Thank you, madam ; thank you kindly. He did indeed honour me with his confidence, and with his friendship. I am sure he was more like a brother to me than an employer. Ah, madam ! I shall never, never, see his fellow again." And honest Bayne turned away with his hand to his eyes.

This seemed to Mrs. Little to be more than the occasion required, and did not tend to lessen her misgivings. However, she said gravely, "Mr. Bayne, I suppose you have heard there is to be a wedding in the town to-day ? Miss Carden ?"

"That is sudden ! No, madam, I didn't know it. I can hardly believe it."

"It is so. She marries a Mr. Coventry. Now I think you were in my son's confidence ; can you tell me whether there was any quarrel between him and Miss Carden before he left us ?"

"Well, madam, I didn't see so much of him lately, he was always at the other works. Would to heaven he had never seen them. But I don't believe he ever gave that lady an unkind word : he was not that sort ; he was ready of his hand against a man, but a very lamb with women he was. And so she is going to marry ? Well, well ; the world it must go round. She loved him dearly, too. She was down at Bolt and Little's works day after day searching for him. She spent money like water, poor thing ! I have seen her with her white face and great eyes watching the men drag the river for him ; and, when that horrible thing was found at last, they say she was on the bridge and swooned dead away, and lay at death's door. But you will know all this, madam ; and it is sad for me to speak of, let alone you that are his mother."

The colour died out of Mrs. Little's cheek as he spoke ; but, catching now a glimpse of the truth, she drew Bayne on with terrible cunning, and so learned that there had been a tremendous explosion, and Jael Dence taken

up for dead; and that, some time after, an arm and a hand had been found in the river and recognized for the remains of Henry Little.

When she had got this out of the unwary Bayne she uttered a piercing scream, and her head hung over the chair, and her limbs writhed, and the whole creature seemed to wither up.

Then Bayne saw with dismay what he had done, and began to falter out expressions of regret.

She paid no attention.

He begged her to let him fetch her some salts or a cordial.

She shook her head, and lay weak as water and white as a sheet.

At last she rose, and, supporting herself for a moment by the back of the chair, she said, "You will take me to see my son's remains."

"Oh, for heaven's sake don't think of it!"

"I must; I cannot keep away from them an instant. And how else can I know they are his? Do you think I will believe any eye but my own?—Come."

He had no power to disobey her. He trembled in every limb at what was coming, but he handed her into her carriage, and went with her to the Town Hall.

When they brought her the tweed sleeves she trembled like an aspen leaf. When they brought her the glass receptacle she seized Bayne by the shoulder, and turned her head away. By degrees she looked round, and seemed to stiffen all of a sudden. "It is not my son," said she.

She rushed out of the place, bade Mr. Bayne good-morning, and drove directly to Doctor Amboyne. She attacked him at once. "You have been deceiving me all this time about my son; and what am I the better? what is anybody the better? Now tell me the truth. You think him dead?"

(Doctor Amboyne hung his head in alarm and confusion.)

"Why do you think so? Do you go by those remains? I have seen them. My child was vaccinated on the left arm, and carried the mark. He had specks on two of his finger-nails: he had a small wart on his little finger: and his fingers were not blunt and uncouth, like that; they were as taper as any lady's in England: that hand is nothing like my son's; you are all blind; yet you must go and blind the only one who had eyes, the only one who really loved him, and whose opinion is worth a straw."

Doctor Amboyne was too delighted at the news to feel these reproaches very deeply. "Thank God!" said he. "Scold me, for I deserve it. But I did for the best; but, unfortunately, we have still to account for his writing to no one all this time. No matter. I begin to hope. That was the worst evidence. Edith, I must go to Woodbine Villa. That poor girl must not marry in ignorance of this. Believe me, she will never marry Coventry, if *he* is alive. Excuse my leaving you at such a time, but there is not a moment to be lost."

He placed her on a sofa, and opened the window; for, by a natural

reaction, she was beginning to feel rather faint. He gave his housekeeper strict orders to take care of her, then, snatching his hat, went hastily out.

At the door he met the footman with several letters (he had a large correspondence), shoved them pell-mell into his breast-pocket, shouted to a cabman stationed near, and drove off to "Woodbine Villa."

It was rather up-hill, but he put his head out of the window and offered the driver a sovereign to go fast. The man lashed his horse up the hill, and did go very fast, though it seemed slow to Doctor Amboyne, because his wishes flew so much faster.

At last he got to the villa, and rang furiously.

After a delay, that set the Doctor stamping, Lally appeared.

"I must see Miss Carden directly."

"Step in, sir; she won't be long now."

Doctor Amboyne walked into the dining-room, and saw it adorned with a wealth of flowers, and the wedding-breakfast set out with the usual splendour; but there was nobody there; and immediately an uneasy suspicion crossed his mind.

He came out into the passage, and found Lally there.

"Are they gone to the church?"

"They are," said Lally, with consummate coolness.

"You Irish idiot!" roared the Doctor; "why couldn't you tell me that before?" And, notwithstanding his ungainly figure, he ran down the road, shouting, like a Stentor, to his receding cabman.

"Bekase I saw that every minute was gold," said Lally, as soon as he was out of hearing.

The cabman, like most of his race, was rather deaf and a little blind, and Doctor Amboyne was much heated and out of breath before he captured him. He gasped out, "To St. Peter's Church, for your life!"

It was rather down-hill this time, and about a mile off.

In little more than five minutes the cab rattled up to the church door.

Doctor Amboyne got out, told the man to wait, and entered the church with a rapid step.

Before he had gone far up the centre aisle, he stopped.

Mr. Coventry and Grace Carden were coming down the aisle together in wedding costume, the lady in her bridal veil.

They were followed by the bridesmaids.

Doctor Amboyne stared, and stepped aside into an open pew to let them pass.

They swept by; he looked after them, and remained glued to his seat till the church was clear of the procession.

He went into the vestry, and found the curate there.

"Are that couple really married, sir?" said he.

The curate looked amazed. "As fast as I can make them," said he, rather flippantly.

"Excuse me," said the doctor, faintly. "It was a foolish question to ask."

"I think I have the honour of speaking to Doctor Amboyne?"

Doctor Amboyne bowed, mechanically.

"You will be at the wedding-breakfast, of course?"

"Humph!"

"Why, surely you are invited."

"Yes," (with an equally absent air.)

Finding him thus confused, the sprightly curate laughed, and bade him good-morning, jumped into a hansom, and away to Woodbine Villa.

Doctor Amboyne followed him slowly.

"Drive me to Woodbine Villa. There's no hurry now."

On the way, he turned the matter calmly over, and put this question to himself.—Suppose he had reached the villa in time to tell Grace Carden the news! Certainly he would have disturbed the wedding; but would it have been put off any the more? The bride's friends and advisers would have replied, "But that is no positive proof that he is alive; and, if he is alive, he has clearly abandoned her. Not a line for all these months."

This view of the matter appeared to him unanswerable, and reconciled him, in a great degree, to what seemed inevitable.

He uttered one deep sigh of regret, and proceeded now to read his letters; for he was not likely to have another opportunity for an hour or two at least, since he must be at the wedding-breakfast. His absence would afflict the bride.

The third letter he took out of his breast-pocket bore an American postmark. At the first word of it he uttered an ejaculation, and his eye darted to the signature.

Then he gave a roar of delight. It was signed "Henry Little," and the date only twelve days old.

His first thought was the poor lady who, at this moment, lay on a sofa in his house, a prey to doubts and fears he could now cure in a moment.

But no sooner had he cast his eyes over the contents, than his very flesh began to creep with dire misgivings and suspicions.

To these succeeded the gravest doubts as to the course he ought to pursue at Woodbine Villa.

He felt pretty sure that Grace Carden had been entrapped into marrying a villain, and his first impulse was to denounce the bridegroom before the assembled guests.

But his cooler judgment warned him against acting in hot blood, and suggested it would be better to try and tell her privately.

And then he asked himself what would be the consequence of telling her.

She was a lady of great spirit, fire, and nobility. She would never live with this husband of hers.

And then came the question, what would be her life?

She might be maid, wife, and widow, all her days.

Horrible as it was, he began almost to fear her one miserable chance of happiness might lie in ignorance.

But then how long could she be in ignorance ?

Little was coming home ; he would certainly speak out.

Dr. Amboyne was more tormented with doubts than a man of inferior intellect would have been. His was an academic mind, accustomed to look at every side of a question : and, when he reached Woodbine Villa, he was almost distracted with doubt and perplexity. However, there was one person from whom the news must not be kept a moment. He took an envelope out of his pocket-book, and sent the cabman to Mrs. Little with this line :—

“THANK God, I have a letter from Henry Little by this day's post. He is well. Wait an hour or two for me. I cannot leave Woodbine Villa at present.”

He sent this off by his cabman, and went into the breakfast-room in a state of mind easier to imagine than to describe.

The party were all seated, and his the only vacant place.

It was like a hundred other weddings at which he had been ; and, seeing the bride and bridegroom seated together, as usual, and the pretty bridesmaids tittering, as usual, and the gentle dulness lighted up with here and there a feeble jest, as usual, he could hardly realize that horrible things lay beneath the surface of all this snowy bride-cake, and flowers, and white veils, and weak jocoseness.

He stared, bowed, and sank into his place, like a man in a dream.

Bridesmaids became magnetically conscious that an incongruous element had entered ; so they tittered. At what does sweet silly seventeen not titter ?

Knives and forks clattered, champagne popped, and Doctor Amboyne was more perplexed and miserable than he had ever been. He had never encountered a more hopeless situation.

Presently Lally came and touched the bridegroom. He apologized, and left the room a moment.

Lally then told him to be on his guard, for the fat doctor knew something. He had come tearing up in a fly, and had been dreadfully put out when he found Miss Carden was gone to the church.

“Well, but he might merely wish to accompany her to the church : he is an old friend.”

Lally shook his head and said there was much more in it than that ; he could tell by the man's eye, and his uneasy way. “Master, dear, get out of this, for heaven's sake, as fast as ye can.”

“You are right ; go and order the carriage round, as soon as the horses can be put to.”

Coventry then went hastily back to the bridal guests, and Lally ran to the neighbouring inn which furnished the four post-horses.

Coventry had hardly settled down in his chair before he cast a keen but furtive glance at Doctor Amboyne's face.

Then he saw directly that the Doctor's mind was working, and that he was secretly and profoundly agitated.

But, after all, he thought, what could the man know? And if he had known anything, would he have kept it to himself?

Still he judged it prudent to propitiate Doctor Amboyne; so, when the time came for the usual folly of drinking healths, he leaned over to him, and, in the sweetest possible voice, asked him if he would do them both the honour to propose the bride's health.

At this unexpected call from Mr. Coventry, Doctor Amboyne stared in the bridegroom's face. He stared at him so that other people began to stare. Recovering himself a little, he rose mechanically, and surprised everybody who knew him.

Instead of the easy gaiety natural to himself, and proper to the occasion, he delivered a few faltering words of affection for the bride; then suddenly stopped, and, after a pause, said, "But some younger man must foretell her the bright career she deserves. I am unfit. We don't know what an hour may bring forth." With this he sank into his chair.

An uneasy grin, and then a gloom, fell on the bright company at these strange words, and all looked at one another uncomfortably.

But this situation was unexpectedly relieved. The young curate rose, and said, "I accept the honour Doctor Amboyne is generous enough to transfer to the younger gentlemen of the party,—accept it with pride."

Starting from this exordium he pronounced, with easy volubility, a charming panegyric on the bride, congratulated her friends, and then congratulated himself on being the instrument to unite her in holy wedlock with a gentleman worthy of her affection. Then, assuming for one moment the pastor, he pronounced a blessing on the pair, and sat down, casting glances all round out of a pair of singularly restless eyes.

The loud applause that followed left him in no doubt as to the favourable effect he had produced. Coventry, in particular, looked most expressively grateful.

The bridegroom's health followed, and Coventry returned thanks in a speech so neat and well delivered, that Grace felt proud of his performance.

Then the carriage and four came round, and Coventry gave Grace an imploring glance on which she acted at once, being herself anxious to escape from so much publicity. She made her curtsies and retired to put on her travelling-dress.

Then Doctor Amboyne cursed his own indecision, but still could not make up his mind, except to tell Raby and make him the judge what course was best.

The gaiety, never very boisterous, began to flag altogether; when suddenly a noise was heard outside, and one or two young people, who darted unceremoniously to the window, were rewarded by the sight of a man and a woman struggling and quarrelling at the gate. The disturb-

ance in question arose thus. Jael Dence, looking out of Grace's window, saw the postman coming, and ran to get Grace her letters (if any) before she went.

The postman, knowing her well, gave her the one letter there was.

Lally, returning from the inn, where he had stopped one unlucky minute to drain a glass, saw this, and ran after Jael and caught her just inside the gate.

"That is for me," said he, rudely.

"Nay, it's for thy betters, young man; 'tis for Miss Grace Carden."

"She is Mrs. Coventry now, so give it me."

"I'll take her orders first."

On this Lally grabbed at it and caught Jael's right hand, which closed directly on the letter like a vice.

"Are these your manners?" said she. "Give over now."

"I tell you I will have it," said he, fiercely, for he had caught sight of the handwriting.

He seized her hand and applied his knuckles to the back of it with all his force. That hurt her, and she gave a cry, and twisted away from him and drew back; then, putting her left hand to his breast, she gave a great yaw, and then a forward rush with her mighty loins, and a contemporaneous shove with her amazing left arm, that would have pushed down some brick walls, and the weight and strength so suddenly applied sent Lally flying like a feather. His head struck the stone gate-post, and he measured his length under it.

Jael did not know how completely she had conquered him, and she ran in with a face as red as fire, and took the letter up to Grace, and was telling her, all in a heat, about the insolence of her new husband's Irish servant, when suddenly she half recognized the handwriting, and stood staring at it, and began to tremble.

"Why, what is the matter?" said Grace.

"Oh, nothing, Miss. I'm foolish. The writing seems to me like a writing we shall never see again." And she stood and trembled still more, for the handwriting struck her more and more.

Grace ran to her, and, at the very first glance, uttered a shriek of recognition. She caught it from Jael, tore it open, saw the signature, and sank into a chair, half fainting, with the letter pressed convulsively to her breast.

Jael, trembling, but comparatively self-possessed, ran to the door directly, and locked it.

"My darling! my darling! he is alive. The dear words, they swim before my eyes. Read! read! tell me what he says. Why has he abandoned me? He has not abandoned me. Oh, God! what have I done? what have I done?"

Before that letter was half read, or rather sobbed, out to her, Grace tore off all her bridal ornaments, and trampled them under her feet, and moaned, and twisted, and writhed, as if her body was being tortured as

well as her heart; for Henry was true as ever, and she had married a villain.

She took the letter from Jael, and devoured every word; though she was groaning and sobbing with the wildest agony all the time.

"MY OWN DEAREST GRACE,

New York, July 18.

"I WRITE you these few lines in wonder and pain. I have sent you at least fifteen letters, and in most of them I have begged you to write to me at the Post-office, New York; yet not one line is here to greet me in your dear handwriting. Yet my letters must have all reached 'Woodbine Villa,' or why are they not sent back? Of three letters I sent to my mother, two have been returned from Aberystwith, marked, 'Gone away, and not left her address.'

"I have turned this horrible thing every way in my mind, and even prayed God to assist my understanding: and I come back always to the same idea, that some scoundrel has intercepted my letters.

"The first of these I wrote at the works on the evening I left Hillsborough; the next I wrote from Boston, after my long illness, in great distress of mind on your account; for I put myself in your place, and thought what agony it would be to me if nine weeks passed, and no word from you. The rest were written from various cities, telling you I was making our fortune, and should soon be home. Oh! I cannot write of such trifles now.

"My own darling, let me find you alive; that is all I ask. I know I shall find you true to me, if you are alive.

"Perhaps it would have been better if my heart had not been so entirely filled by you. God has tried me hard in some things, but He has blessed me with true friends. It was ungrateful of me not to write to such true friends as Doctor Amboyne and Jael Dence. But, whenever I thought of England, I saw only you.

"By this post I write to Doctor Amboyne, Mr. Bolt, Mr. Bayne, and Jael Dence.

"This will surely baffle the enemy who has stopped all my letters to you, and will stop this one, I daresay.

"I say no more, beloved one. What is the use? You will perhaps never see this letter, and you know more than I can say, for you know how I love you: and that is a great deal more than ever I can put on paper.

"I sail for England in four days. God help me to get over the interval.

"I forget whether I told you I had made my fortune.

"Your devoted and most unhappy lover,

"HENRY."

Grace managed to read this, in spite of the sobs and moans that shook her, and the film that half blinded her; and, when she had read it, sank heavily down, and sat all crushed together, with hands working like phrenzy.

Jael kneeled beside her, and kissed and wept over her, unheeded.

Then Jael prayed aloud beside her—unheeded.

At last she spoke, looking straight before her, as if she was speaking to the wall.

"Bring my godfather here."

"Won't you see your father first?" said Jael, timidly.

"I have no father. I want something I can lean on over the gulf—a man of honour. Fetch Mr. Raby to me."

Jael kissed her tenderly, and wept over her once more, a minute, then went softly downstairs, and straight into the breakfast-room.

Here, in the meantime, considerable amusement had been created by the contest between Lally and Jael Dence, the more so on account of the triumph achieved by the weaker vessel.

When Lally got up, and looked about him ruefully, great was the delight of the younger gentlemen.

When he walked indoors, they chaffed him through the open window, and none of them noticed that the man was paler than even the rough usage he had received could account for.

This jocund spirit, however, was doomed to be shortlived.

Lally came into the room, looking pale and troubled, and whispered a word in his master's ear; then retired, but left his master as pale as himself.

Coventry, seated at a distance from the window, had not seen the scrimmage outside, and Lally's whispered information fell on him like a thunderbolt.

Mr. Beresford saw at once that something was wrong, and hinted as much to his neighbour. It went, like magic, round the table, and there was an uneasy silence.

In the midst of this silence, mysterious sounds began to be heard in the bride's chamber; a faint scream; feet rushing across the floor; a sound as of some one sinking heavily on to a chair or couch.

Presently came a swift stamping, that told a tale of female passion; and, after that, confused sounds, that could not be interpreted through the ceiling, yet, somehow, the listeners felt they were unusual. One or two attempted conversation, out of politeness; but it died away—curiosity and uneasiness prevailed.

Lally put his head in at the door, and asked if the carriage was to be packed.

"Of course," said Coventry; and soon the servants, male and female, were seen taking boxes out from the hall to the carriage.

Jael Dence walked into the room, and went to Mr. Raby.

"The bride desires to see you immediately, sir."

Raby rose, and followed Jael out.

The next minute, a lady's-maid came, with a similar message to Doctor Amboyne.

He rose with great alacrity, and followed her.

There was nothing remarkable in the bride's taking private leave of these two valued friends. But, somehow, the mysterious things that had preceded, made the guests look with half suspicious eyes into everything ; and Coventry's manifest discomfiture, when Doctor Amboyne was sent for, justified this vague sense that there was something strange going on beneath the surface.

Neither Raby nor Amboyne came down again, and Mr. Beresford remarked aloud that the bride's room was like the lion's den in the fable, "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*"

At last, the situation became intolerable to Coventry. He rose, in desperation, and said, with a ghastly attempt at a smile, that he must, nevertheless, face the dangers of the place himself, as the carriage was now packed, and Mrs. Coventry and he, though loth to leave their kind friends, had a longish journey before them. "Do not move, I pray ; I shall be back directly."

As soon as he had got out of the room, he held a whispered consultation with Lally, and then, collecting all his courage, and summoning all his presence of mind, he went slowly up the stairs, determined to disown Lally's acts (Lally himself had suggested this), and pacify Grace's friends, if he could ; but, failing that, to turn round, and stand haughtily on his legal rights, ay, and enforce them too.

But, meantime, what had passed in the bride's chamber ?

Raby found Grace Carden, with her head buried on her toilet-table, and her hair all streaming down her back.

The floor was strewn with pearls and broken ornaments, and fragments of the bridal veil. On the table lay Henry Little's letter.

Jael took it, without a word, and gave it to Raby.

He took it, and, after a loud ejaculation of surprise, began to read it.

He had not quite finished it, when Doctor Amboyne tapped at the door, and Jael let him in.

That crushed figure with dishevelled hair, and Raby's eye gleaming over the letter in his hand, told him at once what was going on.

He ceased to doubt, or vacillate, directly : he whispered Jael Dence to stand near Grace, and watch her closely.

He had seen a woman start up and throw herself, in one moment, out of a window, for less than this, a woman crushed apparently, and more dead than alive, as Grace Carden was.

Then he took out his own letter, and read it in a low voice to Mr. Raby ; but it afterwards appeared the bride heard every word.

"MY BEST FRIEND,

"FORGIVE me for neglecting you so long, and writing only to her I love with all my soul. Forgive me, for I smart for it. I have written fifteen letters to my darling Grace, and received no reply. I wrote her one yesterday, but have now no hope she will ever get it.

This is terrible, but there is worse behind. This very day, I have learned that my premises were blown up, within a few hours of my leaving, and poor, faithful Jael Dence nearly killed; and then a report of my own death was raised, and some remains found in the ruins, that fools said were mine. I suppose the letters I left in the box were all destroyed by the fire.

"Now, mark my words, one and the same villain has put that dead man's hand and arm in the river, and has stopped my letters to Grace; I am sure of it. So what I want you to do is, first of all, to see my darling, and tell her I am alive and well, and then put her on her guard against deceivers.

"I suspect the postman has been tampered with: I write to Mr. Ransome to look into that. But what you might learn for me, is, whether anybody lately has had any opportunity to stop letters addressed to 'Woodbine Villa.' That seems to point to Mr. Carden, and he was never a friend of mine. But, somehow, I don't think he would do it.

"You see, I ask myself two questions. Is there any man in the world who has a motive strong enough to set him tampering with my letters? and, again, is there any man base enough to do such an act? And the answer to both questions is the same. I have a rival, and he is base enough for anything. Judge for yourself. I as good as saved that Coventry's life, one snowy night, and all I asked in return was that he wouldn't blow me to the trades, and so put my life in jeopardy. He gave me his word of honour he wouldn't. But he broke his word. One day, when Grotait and I were fast friends, and never thought to differ again, Grotait told me this Coventry was the very man that came to him and told him where I was working. Such a jump of human dirt as that, for you can't call him a man, must be capable of anything."

Here the reading of the letter was interrupted by an incident.

There was, on the toilet-table, a stiletto, with a pearl handle; it was a small thing, but the steel rather long, and very bright and pointed.

The unfortunate bride, without lifting her head from the table, had reached out her hand, and was fingering this stiletto. Jael Dence went and took it gently away, and put it out of reach. The bride went on fingering, as if she had still got hold of it.

Amboyne exchanged an approving glance with Jael, and Raby concluded the letter.

"I shall be home in a few days after this; and, if I find my darling well and happy, there's no great harm done: I don't mind my own trouble and anxiety, great as they are: but if any scoundrel has made her unhappy, or made her believe I am dead, or false to my darling, by God I'll kill him, though I hang for it next day."

Crushed, benumbed, and broken as Grace Coventry was, this sentence seemed to act on her like an electric shock.

She started wildly up. "What! my Henry die like a felon—for a villain like him, and an idiot like me. You won't allow that; nor you—nor I."

A soft step came to the door, and a gentle tap.

"Who is that?" said Dr. Amboyne.

"The bridegroom," replied a soft voice.

"You can't come in here," said Raby, roughly.

"Open the door," said the bride.

Jael went to the door, but looked uncertain.

"Don't keep the bridegroom out," said Grace, reproachfully. Then, in a voice as sweet as his own, "I want to see him; I want to speak to him."

Jael opened the door slowly, for she felt uneasy. Raby shrugged his shoulders contemptuously at Grace's condescending to speak to the man, and in so amiable a tone.

Coventry entered, and began, "My dear Grace, the carriage is ready——"

No sooner had she got him fairly into the room, than the bride snatched up the stiletto, and flew at the bridegroom with gleaming eyes, uplifted weapon, the yell of a furious wild beast, and hair flying out behind her head like a lion's mane.

Sounding the Gong.

I was told of a man the other day who had a country-house invitation upon which he rather prided himself. It was not that the family was noble or even especially well-received in the county; there were no daughters of any beauty, nor any sons who were supposed to be unusually agreeable. But the house was very large, its master was reported to be very rich; the pictures were fine, the preserves abundantly stocked; men-servants and maid-servants were said to come in to prayers in the morning in numbers so considerable that they would have made a respectable congregation in a village church. What was glass in other houses was crystal there; what was china was the heaviest silver. The carpets were soft as velvet; the tapestry of the curtains was almost unique. It was all walnut and maple and oak; silk damask, cretonne chintz, and brocade; ormolu, Dresden china, and silver. In short, to put the matter figuratively, the whole place from roof to basement was "ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion."

The visitor arrived—I think in some sort of open trap procured from the neighbourhood of the railway-station—and was received at the door by two persons, one in the regulation black and white, the other in very gorgeous apparel indeed. The day was cold, and the guest had travelled far, and, anxious to reach his room at once, he was conducted to it. The furniture was very choice; a little pinned over, perhaps, in its richest and most delicate parts, but showing enough of its native beauty to be striking. The guest entered, the door was softly closed behind him, and he found himself in the presence of the furniture, his portmanteau (considerately opened for him, of course), and a very reasonable quantity of hot water. There was no fire. Shivering with cold, he made the most of the hot water; and, with as much despatch as possible, prepared himself to meet the family. The welcome was warm enough, but the room was cold, and he earnestly desired dinner, for he was very hungry. Presently a charming sound met his ear—it was charming, and yet there was a sort of severity in it. It was the gong, and the person who struck it seemed to intimate, by the energy of his action, that the sound was intended to call those whom it might concern to no ordinary duty. There was just a suspicion of the spirit of "At what time ye hear, &c. &c.—well, but if not, &c. &c.," which would in any case have prevented hesitation; but in the present instance there was no temptation to it. The gong told the hour of dressing. Presently a sound still more stirring if possible, and still more welcome, told the hour of dinner. The lady of the house was conducted, and so was everything else, in the

most *recherché* manner. Served upon silver, and presented by those whose dresses were tagged with lace and glittering with gold, appeared tasteless soup, a little hashed mutton, a second day's entrée, and a cheese-cake. All, literally and entirely all,—unless, indeed, we mention fluids. There was very nice marsala at dinner, and, after the meal, claret and sherry. The claret, I think, cost 14s. the dozen; but the sherry was, perhaps, "that" at four-and-twenty.

It is evident that something can be written on this subject of "Sounding the Gong," which may go considerably beyond the literal circumstances. One might easily find oneself drifting into ethics and allegory, and "improving the occasion" without mercy. And I will not declare it to be impossible that some little effort in that direction may be made presently; at the same time, I have not quite done with the material "gong" yet.

It is notorious enough that, while the majority of men are really hospitable to their guests, many are not wanting who seem hardly to know what true hospitality means. Either they make you feel that you are *not at home* by hurrying you into this or that enjoyment, giving no sufficient time in which to prepare for it; or they give you a good dinner and no fire, or a fire and a bad dinner, or neither dinner nor fire; or they make you breakfast at a time which to you seems unearthly; or they send you to bed at half-past ten without the possibility of tobacco: all these things they do—all these things, at any rate, are done by them collectively. I remember a rather good tale, much to the point here, told me by a well-known "deputation" of the Curates' Aid Society. These travelling speakers are dependent upon the hospitality of the squire or the parson of the parish in which they "advocate the claims of the society." They very properly make it a rule, or next to a rule, never to go to an hotel; for doing so would, of course, diminish considerably the funds which they accumulate, and it is only just and right that the leading men in the parish—the clergyman most clearly—should offer all hospitality to the apostle who comes into it. The experience of these men, I need hardly say, is very extensive with regard to the matter on hand. Sometimes they fare sumptuously, sometimes moderately, occasionally very poorly indeed. The "deputation" of whom I have spoken had many little incidents to relate, the result of his great experience; and the one to which I just now referred is this:—A friend of his, a "deputation," was staying at a vicarage where it was difficult to obtain the necessaries of life, and impossible to procure the luxuries. The rooms were cold, the dinners raw, the wine wretched, the hours barbarous. The accustomed pipe, which so constantly was an introduction to the slumbers of our reverend friend, was wanting altogether; the one glass of hot grog was wanting also. These things were serious. But a "deputation" is not easily done, either on the platform or off it; and this gentleman at length showed himself equal to the occasion. For, one evening immediately after ten o'clock prayers, as the solitary plated candlestick was taken and our friend was on the point of ascending the stairs, the voice

of his hostess, in almost unaccustomed tones, was heard inquiring whether he would not have a little hot water. *She* meant to wash his hands in, of course; but he, to his eternal credit, answered, with a presence of mind and a tact which could belong only to a "deputation," "Thank you, if you please; and I should like *three lumps of sugar*." I believe they always gave him hot grog after that.

I confess that this tale is *à propos* only to one half of the subject; it deals with hospitality, but it does not touch the ostentation with which it is sometimes offered; nevertheless perhaps it was worth telling. There is another, however, which occurs to me at this moment, strangely enough,—for I have no connection whatever with any of these societies,—pertaining also to a "deputation." A gong was sounded here, not indeed for dinner, but the gong of hospitality and assertion on the part of the host, and of much pretention on that of the guest.

The vicar of the parish in which I then lived told me one day that a very famous "deputation" was coming late that evening, who was most strict in his proprieties, and who had entirely left the world with its blandishments and its frivolities. "Does he smoke?" said I, rather wickedly, for these good fathers, like many other reasonable men, do smoke sometimes. "*Smoke!*" ejaculated the vicar; and he did not condescend to any further reply. Well, nine o'clock came, and with it the "deputation." A remarkably handsome silver coffee-pot, with other things to match, had been prepared; and this good man, the "deputation," holding his hands over the tea-tray, said to himself one of the longest private graces I ever,—not listened to, but beheld. It occurred to me that I was perhaps a little out of place, that the talk, though excellent, might be above me, and I therefore shortly took my leave. But I met the vicar the next morning, who, the smile creeping over his face in spite of himself, told me that his guest at bed-time had appeared so fidgety and uncomfortable that he was compelled to ask if he could be of any service. Why, yes. Might he smoke one pipe in the kitchen, or up his bed-room chimney? I think the vicar tried to look grave when he told me this, but we both burst out laughing in the end. The gong had been sounded so fearfully; it had summoned to a hospitality of so one-sided a nature, so strict, so proper, so demure; it had announced its coffee-pot and its grace before meat with such a flourish; it had chilled me with the anticipation of an exaggerated propriety; and it ended, yes, it ended in the total inability to go to bed without tobacco, and in the unique picture of an apostle smoking a new "clay" up the kitchen chimney.

The literal or the figurative gong of hospitality is an instrument which ought to be sounded with caution. It is a pity to make too much noise in one's hall, and a still greater pity to "profess too much," even if, like the lady in *Hamlet*, we keep our word. But gong or no gong, there are certain conditions taken for granted by the guest, which it is hardly honest in the host not to fulfil. For instance, the latter is tacitly pledged,

I think; not to let the nursery overflow its banks too frequently, and inundate the paths of daily life: he has no right to force an argument on his guest, and to keep the thunder of controversy on some detested subject constantly rumbling over his head. Of active duties there can be no doubt, and one would only waste words in reciting them. It is equally clear that the guest comes in with a certain sound of a trumpet which must not be as one of the hypocrites. He is not to command but to obey,—to accept hours, customs, and arrangements: he may suggest, indeed, but not plan; and he must remember, by all he holds most dear, not—by thought, word, or deed—to treat the house as if it were an inn.

Of obvious matter connected with hospitality, it is perhaps only left to remark, that that man who is constantly giving general invitations, and as often failing afterwards to name week or day, is of all men the greatest humbug. It is true that he may be, and indeed often is, simply a weak person, not only anxious to conciliate or give pleasure for the moment, but really for that moment meaning what he says. He goes away, perhaps not wholly forgetting, but procrastinating; and so, from indolence of mind, and habit, the affair drops at last out of his intention altogether. The fact is that,—without his being conscious of the circumstance,—it would be a greater bore to renew the invitation, and to consider when it would be convenient to receive the guest, than to lose something, in a particular instance, of his character for sociability and hospitality; on the other hand, the man may of course be a deliberate liar, offering what he has not the smallest intention of giving, as is the case also in other matters in life.

Leaving the literal gong, one may ask a question of some difficulty perhaps, viz., how far may a man of merit or fortune, of courage, learning, or wealth, assert the *truth* in any of these matters with regard to himself? That is (taking what has as yet been the reality in this paper now as a figure), how loudly may a man sound his gong, if he has on the table an excellent dinner indeed? As a proper modesty must of course be assumed in any pattern character, the question here is simply,—where, in such a case, would modesty end and vanity begin? There are not wanting people who would tell us that, under no circumstances, should a man, however meritorious, speak of his own merit. Others will allow that there are objects and occasions which justify, or even demand, his doing so. And some few, perhaps, assert that, if he will not exceed the truth, he may be his own trumpeter with just as much propriety as he may be the trumpeter of anybody else.

Perhaps if we look curiously into the lives of great men,—and such a contemplation, we are told, should “make our lives sublime,”—we shall find that a very fair number acted upon the third opinion, and asserted themselves roundly. Without affecting to call many witnesses, one may say at once, that Alexander the Great, Cæsar, Napoleon the Great, and Nelson, had very little reticence in this matter: the last of these, and perhaps of all the greatest hero, sometimes even calling for songs which

had been written to celebrate his own deeds. The epic poets had little opportunity of lauding themselves in their own works, though Milton tells us, in some controversial trifle, that he shall one day produce that which will be immortal; but of the others, many went to the full length. Byron vaunted while he deprecated himself. Horace was amongst the most conceited of mortals. The *Ode to Melpomene* is pretty clear on this point; and the—

Exegi monumentum ære perennius,
Regaliq; situ pyramidum altius,

is the prelude to a good deal of self-laudation. When Dr. Parr was asked who was the first Greek scholar, he said "Porson; but I need not tell you who is the second." Philosophers have not the credit of being a very modest race; but it is hardly worth while to make a parade of their opinions. But many great names could be quoted to show that genius, with its peculiar temptations, is not unfrequently retiring; and there are multitudes who have been content to leave their praises to others, or to name them only on a special requirement.

Perhaps, on the whole, *this* will be allowed, that as, in a perfect character, there must not only be no immodesty but no affectation, the fair, temperate, and unobtrusive assertion of one's own qualities is often legitimate, and may occasionally be necessary. Let us look for a moment, to the necessity, as, perhaps, the only point really worth considering.

It may sometimes be necessary for a man to assert himself up to a certain point, for his own proper advancement; for the world, often credulous enough when pinchbeck is exhibited, is, perhaps, sometimes sceptical about the character of true gold. But the truest necessity perhaps lies in the obligation under which every one lives to do the greatest possible good to those about him. To make our teaching of the smallest value, it is necessary that the world should recognize us as capable of giving instruction; and art and science at any rate are learned best from those who can show that they have a right to teach them.* Not that, as a *rule*, the world is slow to discover merit; the case of a good or great man being compelled to intrude his excellencies upon it, is possibly rare: all that is claimed here is, that it may sometimes be necessary.

No doubt, what is really delightful,—that which carries with it all the sympathies and all the praises of mankind,—is the modesty which would hide the merit, but which is drawn from its face by the impatient prayers

* Thus Mr. Ruskin, in his preface to the first edition of *Modern Painters*, writes—"It is proper for the public to know that the writer is no mere theorist, but has been devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical art. Whatever has been generally affirmed of the old school of landscape painting is founded on familiar acquaintance with every important work of art from Antwerp to Naples."

of the world, as the veil of a bride is lifted, not by herself, but by those who would see her beauty.

I have no intention, however, of finishing this trifle in a strain of seriousness in which it scarcely commenced. It is my part here, perhaps, to describe, not so much the good itself which we all love, as its absurd opposite which we all ridicule. The affectation of possessing what we never had, and what the world knows we never had, is very instructive and very amusing. Young men who bared their throats and looked with agony into the ceiling during the first few years of Byron's fame, must have been very funny creatures. So must the young gentleman in Horace's time, who, on the authority of the *De Arte Poetica*, never had their hair or nails cut, because Democritus believed that all poets were mad; and long hair and long nails were considered signs of insanity. And yet many of those people did more than affect—they really believed. They sounded their gongs with the full conviction that those who answered them would not be disappointed. They had persuaded themselves that they were poets. Like Mr. Snodgrass, perhaps, it was never discovered that they had written anything; but that was hardly the point. Of the same sort was the Oxford or Cambridge undergraduate, who is said to have flourished some forty years ago. Coming up as a freshman, he brought with him a bottle of gooseberry-wine, home-made and carefully packed by the hands of an anxious mother, who advised him as to the use of it. This he produced to eleven other freshmen, and, locking the door behind him, declared that not a man should leave the room till the last drop was disposed of. He had just broken from the apron-strings, was smarting under the well-meant motherly advice, and wanted a carouse: to him that bottle, and the eleven men, constituted a carouse, most sincerely and honestly.

After all, either in sincerity or in sham, we have all our gongs. We call the world around us to witness either that we are orthodox or speculative, scrupulous or lax, rich, learned, young, brave, or fortunate. Most of us, I am sure, do it all with the sound of a trumpet, though the din perhaps falls most faintly on our own ears. We are proud of the flavour and the piquancy; and are so charitable withal, or possibly so ostentatious, that, even at the risk of making a noise, we call our friends and neighbours to the festival, that they may rejoice also!

The Barbarossa Legend.

IN that special kind of German folk-lore, which is of a half mythical, half political character, Frederick the Redbeard plays the most prominent part. We come across him in local traditions, in popular poems, in national harangues, now and then even in parliamentary discourses, or in newspaper articles. Only quite recently he made his spectral apparition in a speech of Baron Weichs in the Austrian Reichsrath. Shortly before, it had been said in the Prussian House of Deputies, that the fall of German unity dated from the end of the Imperial Hohenstaufen race, to which Frederick Barbarossa belonged, and that German history, which had gone astray since then, ought to be resumed at that particular point.

The legend itself is, in its essence, well known all over the world. The great German king and emperor has never in reality died, but only withdrawn into the Kyffhäuser mountain; there he sits, in a crystal cave, at a marble table of snowy whiteness, surrounded by his knights—their horses being ready saddled. The whole company are asleep—in a trance—enchanted. Every hundred years the red-bearded prince awakes, and then asks a dwarf, who acts as a page, whether the ravens still fly around the mountain? If the dwarf comes back with the unwelcome message that they still do, Barbarossa and his men again fall asleep for another hundred years. At last, however, the ravens will cease to encircle the hill: he will come out of his magic abode, when he will restore the greatness, power, and welfare of Germany after a bloody battle, in which hosts of her foes will fall.

This story is in keeping with a much-prevailing notion about the whole House of Hohenstaufen. The epoch in which successive rulers of that name held sway in Germany, and over the "Roman Empire" at large, has been designated as the Political Romance of the Middle Ages, as the Epic of our Imperial annals. And, indeed, there has been no lack of dramatic development, of tragic grandeur, of lustre and terror, of stirring contrasts between attempts at vast dominion and a precipitate fall, during the deeply-agitated time from Konrad III. to Konradin. Even as a glittering sword flashes forth from the darkness of night, so—in the words of Zimmermann—the Hohenstaufen race broke with startling brilliancy into our German history. Originally an insignificant family of "adalings,"* they, with giant steps, strode up to the summit of dazzling power. Their rule, from beginning to end, was an incessant glistening of the brandished glaive. And in the flash of the executioner's axe, on the block at Naples, their trace suddenly vanishes—the whole constituting a true tragedy, of soul-moving effect, which only has not yet found its proper poet.

"Heroes" the Hohenstaufen have been called. But heroes of the

* Noblemen.

rising spirit of their time they certainly were not, as the same Suabian historian observes. From the strong root of their power, from Germany, they tore themselves away, slaughtering German right and freedom at the altar of their Italian ambition, and attacking the free cities of Lombardy with a fierce cruelty that sickens the eye and the heart. Nor can it be said even in mitigation, that through their warlike despotism they, at least, upheld the unity of their own nation against the foes which internally undermined it. On the contrary, their unbridled ambition, which continually drove them to seek fields of glory abroad, had the effect of weakening the central authority at home in its dealings with those local governors, whose never-ending, and, at last, successful, rebellion finally led to the establishment of a medley of sovereign dynasties, in the place of a United Empire served by officials removable at will. The Hohenstaufen policy, in fact, was the cause of the later disruption of our national union. The Kaiser had to buy the military aid, which he so frequently required for his expeditions abroad, by concessions of sovereign privileges to his subordinate officials,—the dukes and princes. The very foundation of Austria as a distinct country, whose ruler should not be amenable any longer to the strict control of the German king and Kaiser, is traceable to such a mistaken act of Frederick Barbarossa. Most unjustly, therefore, is he considered the very representative of German unity.

Friends of art and poetry the Hohenstaufen were. They also had, each in his own way, great personal gifts. Bold warriors; some of them *minnesänger*, or troubadours; or inclined towards science and the intellectual enlightenment that flows from it, they yet, with scarcely an exception, were of a despotic temperament. One of the harshest was the famous Redbeard. He had the full *Junker* and tyrant vein. Without being remarkably pious, he yet delivered over that good reformer, Arnold of Brescia, to the Pope, who put him to the stake. The smell of the burnt human flesh was yet in the air when Barbarossa entered Rome, to be crowned emperor by the Pope, Hadrian IV. The towns, the peasantry, had no favour from that German emperor. His notions about his regal power were more than Cæsarean—they have a tinge of the Tartar. When the banner of freedom of the city of Milan was lowered before him, and the unhappy citizens were prostrated at his feet, with ropes round their necks, tears came into the eyes of all those present, at such humiliation of brave men. The Kaiser alone showed a face like a flint: "*sed solus imperator faciem suam firmavit, ut petram.*" He was an enemy of the people, this glorious, but at last doubly-defeated, Cæsar. It is true, towards the end of his prolonged and checkered rule, he made his peace with the Lombard League of Free Cities, and even expressed deep regret for what he had done. That was shortly before his decease. In Asia Minor, on a crusade, he met with his death (1190) in a manner not quite cleared up. Then the ever-busy Saga wove its veil over his memory, transfiguring him to such an extent as to make historical truth well-nigh vanish entirely from this new conception of his character.

Now, it may well be asked : how is it that this arbitrary, in many of his acts rather barbarous, often triumphant, but at last totally and deservedly humiliated warrior-king, who, during a long lifetime, had proved so bitter a foe to the popular classes in town and country, has, after all, been converted, by legend, into a very favourite, darling hero, and future national saviour, of the German nation ?

For nearly forty years had the Redbeard stood at the head of our empire. His figure, therefore, necessarily made a deep impress on his epoch. Even in a bodily sense he was somewhat apt to captivate the people's imagination, if his court writers, who depict him to the very detail of his ears and teeth, have told the truth. They describe him as above the common height, of graceful build and noble deportment. They speak of the lustre of his reddish hair—(which, by-the-by, he wore short, not in waving locks, such as our painters erroneously attribute to him) ;—of the terrible glare of his blue eyes, comparable to the lightning of Heaven ; of the dazzling whiteness of his skin, reminding one of the Alpine snow in the glow of the glaciers ! It will be seen from this that the scribes laid it on thick ; and Frederick was not the man to stop them in their ardour.

Yet, however strong the mark may have been which Barbarossa's image made on his contemporaries, and on the following generations, the question still remains,—How could such an enemy of the people, with all his heroics, be turned into a representative of popular aspirations ? Why was he chosen to typify the Sleeping Deliverer ?

Some may answer that the memory of Frederick I. had become purified, cleansed, as it were, by his later confession of repentance. Others may say that the world of aristocratic chivalry, combined with the influence of the priesthood to whom he had at last become reconciled, had done their best to give the convenient myth a popular currency. All that is, however, not a sufficient explanation. To arrive at a full understanding we must dig deeper. We must try to find the strong roots from which such fables sprout up and burst forth ever and anon, and show the process of transfiguration which they invariably go through, on having attained a certain stage.

First, then, the following facts and principles ought to be kept in mind :—The Redbeard myth is by no means so exact, rounded off, and clearly circumscribed, as one would suppose, for instance, from Rückert's poem. Its contents are *not* identified with a single individual hero. That Saga is rather a poetical transmutation of ancient Germanic religious creeds and attempts at an explanation of the phenomena of nature ; and the strangest bits of oriental mythic lore have gradually become interwoven with it.

"We have then"—some will say—"a *quid pro quo* before us ?"

To this I can only reply in the affirmative.

Yes, paradoxical as it may seem at the first glance,—the emperor who dreams in the mountain-cave, who has never died, and who is surrounded

by crystal splendour, is nothing else than the human transformation of the All-Father Wodan. The tale of the "Wild Hunter," and of the "*Wüthende Heer*," is equally to be traced back to Wodan; and, in a great measure, the vast and winding currents of that strange myth commingle with the not less fantastic course of the Redbeard legend. Not Barbarossa alone, but other Germanic heroes and leaders also, were "enmountained," if I may say so, by popular fiction. Nay, extraordinary, or even ridiculous, as it may sound, there is yet no doubt for the inquirer that Barbarossa in the Kyffhäuser, that the Rodensteiner who dwells in a hill of the Odenwald, that the Schnellert's Spirit, ay, that the Rat-catcher of Hameln, known to the general reader of German literature from Goethe's poem, and that the very bogies of the Christmas time—Knecht Ruprecht, Niklas, and Pelzmärtel—are, after all, the same figure, only in different costumes. If that can be proved, the Barbarossa myth certainly loses very much, though not everything, of its *political* significance. Through centuries, through thousands of years, the materials of Sagas remain essentially the same. The ever-weaving hand of fiction only seeks for new garnish, with which to edge, lace, and border out the familiar garment. Fresh colours are added, fresh adornment wrought into it; but its basis remains unchanged. Thus it preserves the charm of time-honoured remembrances, and still appears attractive to each succeeding generation.

When we look at the old Germanic tale-treasure and endeavour to reduce its contents to the simplest elements—even as we do with a language, when trying to get at its roots—one experiences a feeling as if seeing, in remote antiquity, lofty trees growing up from a few germs, trees which, like unto those of the virgin forest, lower their branches earthwards—striking root once more, so to say, from above: then rise again with firm stem, spreading their boughs—until at last an impenetrable thicket is created, an entangled, labyrinthine wood, in which tree interlaces and grows out from tree, and the very soil seems gnarled, knotted, and fibrous, whilst the thick roof of leaves shuts out every ray of light.

Thus it is with sagas and tales. From Asia a forest of popular legends has spread over Europe, which all curiously hold and interlace each other. Tales which at present have only a place in the nursery, or are yet narrated in a lonely village—by the side of the spinning-wheel, before the flickering fire, when nature seems entranced in a weird winter sleep,—were once a part of glorious hero-sagas, of ambitious religious systems, of heathen creation-stories, of ancient attempts at a philosophical or physical explanation of this wondrous world. That which a superficial half-culture formerly derided as mere boorish nonsense, can in this way be followed into Indian or Egyptian antiquity, and sometimes suddenly comes back upon us in the legends of the Red-skins on the other side of the ocean. But I have to furnish the proof of the Barbarossa legend being only a transformation of older tales and mythologies.

So far from his being alone spirited away into a mountain hollow, the same was fabled, before him, of Charlemagne, who is said to sit

enchanted in the Desenberg, near Warburg; or in a hill near the Weser; in the Spessart; in the Donnersberg; in the Untersberg, and elsewhere. He, too, was to break forth one day from his subterranean dwelling-place as a great leader of battle. The same tale was told of our Henry I. of Germany, who was said to be enmountained near Goslar, and of our Otto the Great, to whom the Kyffhäuser itself was ascribed as his spectral abode. Later, the legend substituted Friedrich the Hohenstaufen for those earlier German kings and emperors. Now the Redbeard was conjured away into the Kyffhäuser; another myth placed him in the Untersberg, one of the legendary haunts of the Franconian Karl the Great.

The doubts about the manner in which Frederick had found his death in the river Seleph—whether it was during a bath, or in riding through it; whether he was drowned, or died a few days after an injudicious plunge into the cooling water,—together with the fact of his having disappeared in the far East, where fables seem to grow wild—contributed certainly much to his name being chosen as a graft on the old mythic stem. The mystery that hung round his decease made him a fit subject for fiction.

Some particular traits of the Barbarossa legend are clearly derived from the East. There is an Asiatic tradition of the fourteenth century, which said that the dominion of the world would once fall to a Prince who could succeed in hanging up his buckler on a certain withered tree. The Tartars related that this tree stood in Tauris—in the Crimea. Other Oriental nations mentioned the Mamre Wood as the place. I may observe, in passing, that this myth has some vague affinity to the ancient Greek tale of the Golden Fleece, which hangs on a tree in a sacred wood, and the conquest of which was to bring glory, riches, and power of dominion.

Now, of Frederick I. of Germany it was fabled that if his beard had reached, in growing, the third corner of the table, an immense change would occur in the world. On the Walser field a great battle would be fought; there a withered tree would stand, on which the Redbeard was to hang up his buckler: thus the victory would be gained, and Germany's dominion would be founded.

Hence it is proved already that Frederick is neither the only mythic figure of this kind, nor the tale itself of exclusively German origin.

Another Barbarossa legend has it that the battle on the Walser field is to herald in the world's end—so to say, a *Götter-Dämmerung*. The bad are slain by the virtuous; Truth and Right obtain the mastery. The political meaning of the myth here disappears entirely. The great carnage which is to take place has a religious significance. The form of this particular saga has a Christian aspect; but its ancient heathen contents may be easily peeled out from it, even as in the *Nibelungen-Lied* the old Germanic heathens may, without difficulty, be recognized under similar garb.

Popular fiction has not stood still after Frederick in its transmuting procedures. About four centuries after him, Charles V., certainly not an emperor of very patriotic German character—he could not even properly converse in German; the Spaniards said he was defective also in Spanish!—

was similarly drawn into the poetic cauldron. Down to quite recent times the peasantry in Upper Hesse related of him that he had fought a great battle and been victorious; in the evening a rock opened, taking in Karl and his army, and then closing once more its walls. There the Emperor sleeps now in the mountain. Every seven years he issues forth with his men in ghostlike array: a storm is heard whizzing through the air, together with the neighing of horses and the clatter of hoofs; after the spirit procession is over, the Wild Chase returns to the mountain.

Now this Charles V., besides being very little of a true German, had given the peasantry small cause for liking him particularly. Under his government occurred that terrible overthrow of the so-called "Peasants' War," which ended with the application of the most frightful punishments and tortures to the defeated insurgents. They were strung up like so many braces of birds, or quartered, or put to death with red-hot irons, the flesh being taken from them piecemeal; or their bodies were ripped up, and their bowels taken out, whilst the whip was applied to the lacerated and howling forms of suffering humanity. And yet the legend of the peasantry transfigured even the Emperor under whom all this happened into a demi-god, throning in a magic cavern!

The fact is, this legend about Charles V., which seems to have arisen as a superstructure on the Barbarossa myth, has a common root with the latter, namely, the myth about the Wild Hunter and the *Wüthende Heer*, which, in its turn, springs from the Wodanic circle of sagas.

Wodan, Wuotan, or Odin, was mainly considered as Lord of the Air, who chases through the sky in the roaring storm. Perhaps his name signified "the Quick-going;" hence the storming, the raging, which would the better account for the transmutation of Wodan's or Wuotan's hosts into a *Wüthende Heer*. But into this etymological question I will not enter, knowing too well the irreconcilable nature of the different derivations, and the impossibility of arriving at any satisfactory solution. On surer ground we tread—if the quaking soil of mythology can at all be regarded as sure—when remembering how similar the ghostlike procession of various popular heroes is to that of the heathen All-Father.

The myth represents him as careering along on a milk-white horse, from whose nostrils fire issues. A broad hat covers the grey head of the ancient god; a wide flowing mantle flutters about his shoulders. The horse is considered a symbol of the drifting cloud. The wide mantle equally typifies the cloud-specked sky; the hat, even, is thought to be a representation of the cloudy cover of the earth. As a symbol of the starry sky, Wuotan, or Muot, as he is sometimes called, with a not unfrequent change of the initial consonant, is also sometimes regarded. Witness the riddle of the Swiss peasantry in the Aargau:—

Der Muot,
Mit dem Breithut,
Hat mehr Gäste
Als der Wald Tannenäste.

To this Lord of the Sky, of the Clouds, and the Winds, the myth attributed the additional character of a Chieftain and Marshal of the Dead, who leads the souls of the departed through the air to the splendid palace, the Walhalla. The Romans compared our Wodan to their own Mercury. Evidently the point of comparison was this, that both held the office of guides to the other world; hence Mercury was called "Psychopompos."

However, it may be asked, what has all this to do with Barbarossa? The close connection will presently be seen.

That god of the winds who careers through the air, leading on horseback the army of the dead, was represented, when not engaged in such stormy procession, as sleeping, dreaming; sleeping in a glistening cloud-castle, or mountain of clouds, in a *Wolkenburg*, or *Wolkenberg* ("Burg" and "Berg" are traceable to the same root). It means the storm that sleeps in the cloud-castle, or, in more sensual form, the Storm-God, the ancient, hoary-headed. And as this storm-god is a leader of the dead whose souls depart through the air, we have here at once the whole necessary scaffolding for the construction of a legend about a great army leader, or warrior king, or, if need be, also a wild hunter, who sleeps and dreams in a mountain, where he waits his time, or from which he occasionally breaks forth. The *Wüthende Heer* of the *wilde Jäger* is Wuotan's army. For awhile the two myths go side by side, each with a touch of the other. Then they separate entirely, that is to say, when, in the memory of the masses, among whom those myths hold sway, all recollection of the root and origin of the words in question has disappeared.

How often, through the misconception of words, has a new mythology, a new superstition, arisen! First, a word was misunderstood; then it was filled out with the corresponding contents which it seemed to indicate. Thus, in some parts of Germany, the *wilde Jäger* became a *Weltjäger*, a world-hunter; and, curiously enough, this latter expression, which has simply been begot by an error of the ear, comes nearer once more to the original idea of the stormy wind, or the storm-god, who pervades, as Wodan, the world. In this manner the false idea comes out of the originally correct word, and the more correct idea grows up from a misconceived designation. Clearly, mankind has some difficulty in getting at truth with such inherent failings of language.

The two great branchings-off of the Wodanic idea are, consequently, the Wild Hunter who dwells in the mountain, and who leads the hosts of the departed; and the different Warrior Kings who sleep in a mountain with their dead yet never-dying hosts.

Each of these separate outgrowths of the Wodanic Saga circle have been worked in the most variegated manner by local fiction. In Brunswick the grave is shown of a Junker Hackelberg, who is there regarded as the wild hunter. In the Uckermark there is a tradition of a wretched huntsman, Bärens, who once went a-chasing on a Sunday, and who is now condemned, with his hounds, to be on the chase for all eternity—at least, whenever the wind howls at night. Would it be believed that

this Junker Hackelberg and this wretched Bärens are, even in name, old Wodan? "*Hakol-bërand*" was once one of the names of Wodan. It means the mantle-wearer,* the wearer of the cloud-mantle. Wodan *Hakol-bërand* became *Hackelberg*; and lastly, throwing off his mantle altogether, he became simple *Bärens*. A whole crowd of figures of the spirit and fairy land, male and female, have in a similar manner been evolved out of some misunderstanding of the numerous surnames and attributes of our ancient German gods and goddesses. To treat of this would, however, lead too far; and I will only remark in passing that Goethe's *wohlbekannter Sänger, der viel-gereiste Rattenfänger*, who "occasionally also catches girls," has arisen from a strange combination of two qualities attributed to Wodan. The rats or mice which he catches are originally nothing but the symbols of the souls whom the All-Father carries to their final destination; the souls, in ancient popular superstition, being often represented as mice. Thus, a little red mouse issues from the mouth of the beauty with whom Faust dances on the Blocksberg. The "girl-catching" of the *Rattenfänger* is reducible to the tradition of Wodan hunting and catching the moss-women, wood-nymphs, and *Loh-jungfern*—that is to say, the storm-god, or the storm, seizes the boughs and the leaves of the forest-tree, shaking and catching them in his embrace. The Hackelberg and the Bärens at last lose, in some parts of Germany, even the faint trace of some resemblance in name to the old heathen god. In Schleswig-Holstein the wild hunter finally came to be a certain Frederick Blohm, the gamekeeper of a bishop; or a certain Herr von Schlippenbach; or, in other provinces, a General Sparr, and so forth. In this manner Wodan had at last donned a livery or a uniform! The manifold popular tales about aristocratic robber-knights also aided in the process of transfiguration. The oddest and most insignificant personages were engrafted on the mythic trunk.

But it is time to pass over to the other branch-line of the Wodanic Saga circle, where we are to meet our Barbarossa. The Junker Hackelberg—and this will explain why I have gone into some details on matters apparently unconnected with the Redbeard legend—may serve here as a transition. He forms, so to speak, with the hero of the *Kyðhäuser*, an ill-matched Siamese twin.

When Junker Hackelberg and the other wild hunters are roving about at night, a raven flies before them. The nocturnal phantom passage of Wodan was equally preceded by the mortuary birds, the ravens. They were the black-feathered harbingers of the souls destined to Walhalla. Besides the ravens and the horses of the Wodanic procession, we also find boars connected with the stormy march of his Hosts of Departed. And here it may be observed that, in the mythic lore of our forefathers, the wind, which scrapes and roots up the soil and raises clouds of dust,

* From "*hakol*," Latin *cucullus*, cowl,—*Guggel*, the German *hehlen*, *Hülle*,—and "*beran*," to bear.

was represented as a boar, from the well-known scraping propensities of that tusked quadruped. Even now-a-days the peasantry in some Bavarian districts speak of the "Wind-Sow" which tramples and roars through the country. The expression is certainly less poetical than that which prevails in some other parts,—namely, *die Windin*, the Lady of the Air, a playful goddess of the storm, whose delight it is to snatch the hats from men's heads, so that they should run after her.

I have spoken of Wodan's ravens, horses, and boars. They are all to be found in the Barbarossa legend. Thus, that warrior-king is again the wraith of the Germanic god that has been spirited away into an underground world. From the dazzling palace, up there in the milk-white cloud-castle, he has, by an inverted *Fata Morgana*, been charmed into a glittering crystal palace of a subterranean cave, where he sits, not on a white horse, but on a white ivory chair, at a white marble table; his whole suite of heroes and representative animals having remained with him. Only, the ravens which formerly preceded Wodan, or sat on his shoulders, now flap their wings round the mountain. But whoever, by chance, strays into the Kyffhäuser, as it happened now and then to some peasant, will see there the horses tied to their stabling-places, and boars also will be met with, running in and out. Now and then, a strange clangour and clatter, as of chains, is heard. It is the storm that is awakening—it is Barbarossa that wants to ride forth into the surrounding land.

We have to take into account here, also, another component part in the formation of myths. Christianity, it is known, had some difficulty in getting a hold on some of the German tribes. They killed the messengers of the new faith who had struck down their sacred trees. The Saxons battled for long years against Charlemagne, as much from love of independence and self-government as from attachment to their own creed, which pleased their warlike and defiant character better than did the meek doctrine of the Saviour who wore the crown of thorns. Now, many among the people, in spite of outward conversion, remained secret adherents of the old *Asen-Saga*. The rites of the Blocksberg, the many trials of persons reputed to be witches dealing with demons, prove the fact in their own way. It has been said that the Reformation could strike root more quickly in the North, because Catholic Christianity had scarcely yet been firmly implanted there. This is certainly true, to some extent; however, I believe that even in the South the heathen ideas and customs, though disfigured in their meaning, and no longer understood, have scarcely died out earlier than they did in the North. It is a chapter on which much indeed might be said. Even now, the reapers in some Bavarian districts are accustomed to bind together the stalks that have remained untouched by the sickles, forming a figure of it, with a head and arms rudely fashioned out of a sheaf, which they call the "Oanswald," "Aswald," or "Oswald," and before which they kneel down, offering thanks and prayers, and exclaiming: "This is for the Aswald!" Here we have an ancient

form of worship in honour of the "Asenwalter," or ruler of the gods, the all-creative force—which afterwards was changed into a "St. Oswald."

The priests, themselves, favoured such transformations. In order to wean the people from its heathen creed, they did not deny the existence of the pagan divinities, but only degraded them, turning them into devils, and making the converts abjure them as if those "devils" had real existence. We have yet such an ancient formula of abjuration, dating from the eighth century, and referring to Thunar, Wodan, Saxnote, "and all the other fiends that are their associates." Sometimes, the dethroned gods and goddesses were changed into dead-alive cave-dwellers of the heroic mould, or into ghastly forms of the lower regions, into nocturnal lemuress and gnomes. The people, still faithful to the old superstition, and bearing in their hearts the ancient god, though not daring to exhibit him in the light of day, hid him by preference in a mountain—embalmed him, if I may say so—put him to sleep—made him dream, and only called him out, in their imagination, at night, or at great distances of time, when he came, as it were, on an occasional visit.

Von Zeit zu Zeit seh' ich den Alten gern,
Und hüte mich, mit ihm zu brechen!

After a while, all recollection of the original significance of the myth vanished, and as this occurred in an age when there were few books, and the art of printing was still unknown, Fancy, which is always apt to run wild among the half-cultivated, then felt perfectly free, and easily broke out into the most disordered inventions. In the long evenings, at the fir-wood fire, when light and shadow play hide-and-seek, the most incredible substitutions and transformations were begotten by an unbridled imagination. Thus Charlemagne—that enemy of the Wodan creed—himself became the substitute of Wodan, and *he* was concealed in the underground palace! Again, later, his place was taken by Frederick of Hohenstaufen; the enemy of the people becoming its apparent favourite. In this way, the most opposite notions and tendencies, heathen and Christian, European and Asiatic, religious and political, are combined in inextricable confusion. The forces of nature, gods, heroes, devils, hags, gnomes, and animals, are all thrown together in a confused heap, forming a precious broth of witchcraft.

I have mentioned Karl the Great as the predecessor of Barbarossa in that particular form of myth which removes a hero from the eyesight of men, giving him a spectral, and yet, at the same time, terrestrial abode. I might allude to a similar myth referring to Dietrich von Bern, that is, Theodorich, the King of the Goths, of Verona, in which all the constituent elements of the legend, with the usual sorcerer's apparatus, are already contained, viz. the mountain, the horses, the dogs, the ravens, the sleep and the dream of the spell-bound hero, as well as the rustling and clatter in the air when he starts for his roving hobgoblin expedition. It is always the same tale, only new raiments are ceaselessly woven for it at the ever-whirring loom of time.

Thus mythology, the heroic legend, and all folk-lore and fairy-tale matter is engaged in a continuous up-and-down process of development and degeneracy. First, we see the feeble attempts of a people in remote antiquity, trying to account for the world and its working forces. Then, partly by the artistic instinct, partly by a misconception of words, partly by the rise of a priestly caste, which endeavours to use the crude ideas of the mass as a means of power and influence for itself, a series of idols and gods are shaped, which either are supposed to walk on the green earth, to haunt its mountains, fields, and rivers, or which are made to throne in the welkin. With these celestial figures the heroes of this world, raised to the position of demi-gods, are gradually confused, if the gods have not been altogether fashioned out of worshipped human leaders. Later, when the original belief suffers in its influence by the invasion of a new mythic creed, an evolution in an inverse rate takes place. Then fiction no longer spreads upwards, but it descends from the serene and lofty heights to the earth, and even into the regions beneath it. The gods once more become simple heroes, men, nay, even cobolds and spectres. The once powerful figure of a Wodan shrinks into an uncommon, or even a common, emperor or king. It suffers diminution to the extent of being changed into a wild hunter, or a gamekeeper on a lordly demesne; or it turns up, after much variegated masquerading, as a Pelznickel among the peasant children, whom it terrifies or rewards before Christmas-time, according to their behaviour. Thus, Freia-Holda, the noble goddess of love, the German Venus, becomes simple Frau Holle, a beautiful witch, or even a spuke, and a hag, charming in the face, but similar to a hollow tree from behind. And songs, which once may have formed part of religious rites, are at last only yet found in a fragmentary form, apparently of sense devoid, or only with an occasional glimpse of meaning—such as the "Song of the Stork," or the "Song of the Kindleins-Brunnen," which children repeat with lisping voices, having heard them when on the mother's or the nurse's knee.

Thus, that which once was revered as heavenly, returns to the earth, is transplanted into field and dale, into caves, nay, even into the kitchen; and a splendid fable of gods ends as an Ashpitel, a Cinderella, who drearily sits at the hearth, shelling peas, despised and ill-used by her sisters, the new religions, until one day the inquirer comes, who, from the delicate slipper, recognizes the sublime beauty, and who raises the soiled tale once more from dust and dirt to its high poetical rank, to its philosophical significance.

In this way we have to comprehend also the Redbeard legend. In doing so, we shall be able to enjoy its poetical contents, without allowing ourselves to be misled in the appreciation of an historical character, and without becoming untrue to those principles of humanity and freedom against which the famous Hohenstaufen Prince was one of the worst offenders.

KARL BLIND.

Two Ladies--Two Hours.

"Girl, get you in!" She went, and in one month
 They wedded her to sixty thousand pounds,
 To lands in Kent, and messuages in York,
 And slight Sir Robert with his watery smile
 And educated whisker.

I.

WHAT restless genius is it that takes so malicious a pleasure in shifting and mingling the various materials of which daily life is composed? No sooner are a set of people and circumstances comfortably sorted out together, than they are suddenly engulfed, dispersed, revolved away,—no sooner are they well dispersed than all the winds, and horses, and laws of gravitation are struggling to bring them together again. Take, for instance, a colony of people living next door to each other and happily established. How long are they left in peace? One dear member crosses the sea—another soon follows, and the remainder cannot fill up the gap. Or let us even take a company of five or six persons comfortably talking round a fire. How long will their talk last on? An hour rarely—half-an-hour, perhaps—even ten minutes is something saved out of the rush of circumstance; and then a clock begins to strike any number from one to twelve; an organ to grind distractingly; a carriage to roll slowly, crushing the gravel outside. Visions flit in of expectant wives and husbands, of impatient coachmen, of other semi-circles—enter Mrs. Grundy,—five o'clock tea, the fire begins to smoke, or what not, and the comfortable little circles jar, break up, disperse in all directions. And, indeed, if a certain number of people are happily established together, the whole combination of accidental circumstances is against them, and nothing can happen that will not interfere more or less with their harmony.

Years ago a little set of people had been sitting round the fire at Brand House, and had dispersed east and west, and for a dozen years, and on the day about which I am writing, some of them had come together again by an odd accident. It is true they were sitting in stiffer attitudes than when they had last assembled, and some of them seemed to have wigs and masks on, compared to their old remembrance of each other. A little girl who was playing in her pinafore last time, is now dressed up as a real young lady, with a red petticoat, and looped grey dress, and round grey eyes, and a chignon; a young fox-hunting parson is disguised as an archdeacon; the hostess, who was a handsome

and dignified person twelve years ago, has put on a black front and spectacles, which certainly do not improve her appearance; the least changed of the party is a young man, who had just come of age when they last met all together. He has grown a thick beard, he has travelled, and learnt to smoke a narghilé since his last visit to Brand House; but, on the whole, he is not greatly altered.

They have been sitting for an hour, and reading and talking of one thing and another, while a log of wood has changed into blue and golden flames. Mrs. Brandiscombe, in the wig and spectacles, announces an arrival by the six-o'clock train. Her son-in-law, the Archdeacon, and his lady, who are returning home next day, talk about stations and cross-roads and convenient trains. The young traveller, it seems, is leaving too, and going to another country-house, called The Mount, about a mile off. The young lady is pressed to stay. "Dear Caroline" (the expected guest) "would be so disappointed to miss her." The girl hesitates, blushes up, says she thinks she must go home with her uncle the Archdeacon; she shall see her friend at dinner; she cannot stay here; she cannot accept the Merediths' invitation to The Mount; she is wanted at home. They all try to persuade her to change her mind; and just as she is giving way the carriage is announced. Mrs. Brandiscombe instantly rises to get ready, and they all disperse; some go to their rooms, some out into the cold dim December world all round about; their voices die away up the staircase and passages, and everything is silent.

Janet Ireton, the young lady in the chignon, is delayed in the hall for a minute by Mr. Hollis of the beard, who asks her if she is going to walk with her uncle. Janet answers shyly and quickly, and springs upstairs lightfooted. She comes upon the two elder ladies leisurely proceeding down the passage.

"He is most to blame, if *those* are his real intentions," says Mrs. Brandiscombe. "He should not cause a young girl to be remarked upon; it is not the first time."

"It is his way, mamma," says Mrs. Debenham, the Archdeacon's second wife. "The Archdeacon won't believe me. What does it matter? he is very nice. I assure you, he means nothing. Don't you remember how he flirted with me and with — Oh, Janet, I didn't hear you."

"Hm—ah!—girls cannot be too careful," says Mrs. Brandiscombe, turning into her room, while Janet, with tingling ears and cheeks, flies down a side passage. The coachman, to his indignation, is actually kept waiting ten minutes.

Janet, who is in her great room at the end of the passage, fastening a black hat, with a smart red feather, becomingly on the top of her chignon, is surprised by a tap at the door, and an apparition of Mrs. Brandiscombe herself, ready veiled, and gloved, and caped, and prepared for her daily airing in the close carriage.

"Although it is against my custom to keep the horses waiting," says

the old lady, "it has occurred to me that, as I am going to call upon Mrs. Meredith, you might like to send some message. Are you quite determined to return home to-morrow?"

"Almost quite," Janet said, wistfully, looking into the old lady's wrinkled face. "I have had a delightful holiday. Everybody has been so kind—I don't——"

"I merely wished to ascertain your intentions," said the shrouded figure, preparing to go. "We are only too glad to keep you, Janet; although I cannot but agree with my daughter in her opinion of our guest. He has, if I don't mistake, a very special reason for wishing to prolong his stay in this neighbourhood—a lady whom he knew. . . But I am not at liberty—I merely wish to express a hope that your name may not be coupled with his, and to approve of your self-respect and prudent consideration for other people's opinion."

Mrs. Brandiscombe had been uttering dark oracles ever since Janet's arrival, but none so definite as this. The girl listened, half angry, half incredulous, half indignant. Then she ran downstairs in no very amiable frame of mind. Mr. Hollis was gone. Her uncle was waiting for her in the hall, rolling an umbrella, and prepared to start. Janet walked away still disturbed in her mind.

"What has become of Mr. Hollis?" said the Archdeacon, looking up and down the misty garden. "He promised to wait for us here."

"Who wants Mr. Hollis?" said Janet. "Come along, uncle John; we shall lose the best part of the day."

II.

Who does not know the look of furniture in a room lately vacated, as it stands about the chimney-piece in confidential proximity? A sort of faint image of the people who are gone is still in the deserted chamber. Stuffed arm-chairs with sprawling castored legs turned towards each other, a *duchesse* with a grand lace back in an affected attitude by the table, a sprinkling of light bachelor cane-chairs joining into the conversation, and then the hostess's state chair in its chintz dressing-gown by the chimney corner, with its work-basket, its paper-cutter, and its book by its side. The book at Brand House is *Early Years of the Prince Consort*. There is a lozenge and a coat of arms upon the paper-cutter. One of the castored chairs has been reading the *Guardian*, which is now lying in a dead faint upon the floor all doubled over. On the grand lace-covered cushion rests a little green book of poetry, with a sprig of holly to mark the place. Everything is quite silent, and a coal falls into the fender, which conscientiously reflects the fire. There is a distant roll (not so loud as that which announces the arrival of the carriage on the stage), then more silence; some one walking in the garden looks in through the tall window. You may see through the glass that it is the gentleman with

the black beard and black eyes and country leggings who was lately established by the lace chair.

He walks away and disappears behind a laurel-bush, and then nothing more happens till the clock begins to strike. With the last stroke of four comes a sound of voices, a rustling of silks. The door opens wide, and a lady is standing in the middle of the room, looking curiously up and down with bright slow glances. Her glances are those of a well-esteemed and well-satisfied person. People look what they *are*, gazing at other lives; they look what they *feel* when they are sitting being gazed at. It is curious to note the different expressions with which people see the daily life-pictures that pass before them, the long portrait-galleries, the pictures of still life for housekeepers, the *tableaux de genre* in our homes. Some look critically, secure of their own standing, though it may be on a different level; others, wistfully, feeling that they have no share, and are always looking on; others—and to this class my lady belongs—with a half-sympathy and a half-indifference. She does not care to feel a whole sympathy, her life has been too complete and calm for that; and yet its very completeness and calmness, which have left no room for some things she may once have dreamt of, prevent her from feeling the whole indifference of very happy people; and now and then she gives a glance from her sheltered bower at the sun and the winds in which others are struggling in the plains without.

Slow as these glances are, they have noted everything: the chairs, the tall windows, across one of which gusty branches are brushing; she sees the distant corners of the room reflected in the dim looking-glasses; she looks back to know if the butler has followed her, and then moves, with a smile, towards the farthest window, passing, reflected on from one grim looking-glass to another (sometimes sideways, sometimes crossing some distant room in a contrary direction to that in which she is really moving), and at last she stops in the shadowy darkness and light of the farthest window. She can see the grey garden through its panes, the black trees and blue dull lawn, the boughs all swaying, the mists hanging from the creaking branches or heaped up at the end of the long alleys; only towards the sea the heavy clouds are rent, and a pale grey gleam lights up the silver and steel of the waters beyond the oak-tree glade. Mist and sea and land without, the familiar streaks and shadows and reflections within. It is a dozen years since she last saw it all; more than that.

My lady, whose name is Caroline, is about thirty years old, a soft happy-looking woman, with brown bright hair, with dimpled cheeks and pretty white hands, on which flash and twinkle a great many diamond rings as she unhooks the clasp of her red gipsy cloak. It slides along her black silk folds and falls in a comfortable purple red heap all round about her feet. So she stands, taking in every indication of what now is, and of what is left since the last time when she stood in this very corner: the same woman, looking out at the same sea and sky and rustling trees, so

unchanged did it all seem to her, so unchanged did she feel. For in two minutes the circles have turned inversely: she has travelled back, beginning at the nearest end of her life: her return, her wanderings, her widowhood, her children, her marriage, her early troubles all whirl past. People are not only their present selves but all their old selves at the same time—sometimes one and sometimes another comes uppermost; and Caroline Rowland is one particular self of a dozen years ago at this minute, an old sad childish self with an odd prescience of the future. Other spirits are there too, dressed in their old-fashioned dresses. Some are alive, some are dead people. The spirit of poor Mr. Brandiscombe is evoked; she can see him in his big chair as he sits nodding off to sleep. Mrs. Brandiscombe has cast away her front, Fanny (she is married to the Archdeacon now: she married a year after her cousin) is sitting at the piano singing "Theckla's Sorrows," set to music. How she used to sing, rolling her little fat body from side to side, and winking her little pig's eyes! . . . With all this rush of old emotion more visions come, bringing a faint blush into the widow's cheek. One of them is the remembrance of a young man. It comes striding straight across the room saying good-by in a quick impatient voice.

She remembers looking up in a bewildered incredulous way, and turning and almost blinded by what she saw—she could not meet his parting looks, they seemed to kill her as she stood beneath them; she could not speak nor cry before them all. She remembered holding on tight by the marble table: all the rest of the room was swinging before her meanwhile in tune to Fanny Brandiscombe's screams. "Why do people remember such things?" says poor Caroline, protesting.

Fanny Brandiscombe would have been flattered if she could have known how many years that song would go on ringing in her cousin's ears. Sometimes people quite unconsciously do something, say something, that is to last another person's lifetime. Sometimes it is, alas! their own lifetime that they put into a passing moment—a minute that never ceases for them. It goes on through life, and beyond life, perhaps, to that other life where how many of us, if the choice were ours, would not gladly carry the sorrows and remembrances of this one? It was a minute like this that Caroline was remembering. To-day, loved and trusted and independent of others, and well considered by the world, and on good terms with herself, she felt as if she could almost envy her girlish humility and innocent helplessness. Now, her standard might be a little wider perhaps, but it was not so high; now she might be happier, perhaps, but not so happy—sorrowier, but never so sorry.

The things that she had hoped for of late seemed sordid and small compared to the old dreams of her youth. Men and women are not stocks and stones looking on unaltered at events as they go by; one's life must affect one in the end. One of the many voices that are in the silence says to Mrs. Rowland: "Yours is an easy life now; your old one was hard and sad and unselfish; the old one was best—the old one was the best."

"What is the use of thinking about it?" says Mrs. Rowland, impatient even from the heights of her serene indifference, and she moves back impatiently to the fire again, glad to escape into to-day once more. "How cold it is. I suppose aunt Brandiscombe still locks up the coal? No one should leave anything unlocked, not even a coal-cellar. It *was* a shame, wasn't it?" (the widow is appealing to her own face in the glass: it looks so sympathizing that she bursts out laughing). "How I cried that night going to bed in the moonlight, and Fanny Brandiscombe cried too. I wonder why she cried? I think if any young man ever empties the cream-jug into my little Kitty's tea, as George Hollis did into mine, I should expect him to come forward, and not to go away for ever without a word. I was civil enough when we met at Florence, and John asked him to dinner."

I think it was to escape from spells of her own fancy, and to feel herself safe in commonplace again, that this modern Melusina rang the bell violently, pulling at a great limp worsted-work arm with a huge brazen hand.

"Will you bring me some tea, if you please?" says Mrs. Rowland to a butler, who appeared in answer to the pull, and whose calm clerical appearance dispersed the ghosts that had been disporting themselves.

The butler looks puzzled.

"Mrs. Brandiscombe will be in to tea at five o'clock," he says, doubtfully. "She has given orders to get everything ready for five, but, of course——"

"Oh, very well," says Mrs. Rowland, "I'll wait. Is there anybody staying in the house?"

"The Archdeacon and Mrs. Debenham are staying till to-morrow, and Miss Ireton remains, I believe," says the butler. "Mr. Hollis is just gone—his luggage is to follow him to the Mount—Mr. Franks left yesterday."

"It is very cold," says Mrs. Rowland, with a little start and shiver; "could you put a log on the fire, and—and bring me a paper, if you please?"

"To-day's papers are only just come," says the butler, respectfully; "and Mrs. Brandiscombe always likes to open them herself."

Any other time Caroline Rowland would have laughed outright at the old well-remembered cranks, that had lasted out so many better things; but to-day all this thinking and remembering have sobered her usual bright spirits; a sort of uneasy doubt has taken hold of her; a sort of self-reproach that had been waiting for her for years; lurking patiently in wait in that dim corner yonder, while other feelings and events came and passed, and time and place shifted, and sorrows changed, and melted into peace. What had she done? Could she forgive herself now? Not quite. Going back into that old corner, it had seemed to her as if her old conscience had laid hands on her—At last I hold you—at last! Why did you try to escape from me? What have you been about? Why had

you so little patience? Why did you flirt with poor John when you loved George Hollis? was that why he was angry? A thought of what might have been—of a union of true hearts, a vision so far different from what its reality had been—seemed to pass before her. "Forgive me, dear John," she was saying in her heart all the time. And perhaps she loved her husband most at this very instant, when she told herself how little she had loved him. Caroline was a woman who, if need be, could put her conscience into another person's keeping; and in John's lifetime he had been purse-bearer and conscience-keeper for them both; and she had but to look nice, and keep within her allowance, and attend to her children, and nurse him when he had the gout, and never think of the past—that, you know, would have been wrong for a married woman; but for a widow—for a widow it was very silly.

It was odd and unexpected and uncomfortable altogether, and that odd chance mention of a name had chilled her; and if she had known she was going to feel like this, nothing would have induced her to come; but soon the widow calmed down, and the fire burnt warm, and she pulled her knitting from her pocket, and in putting the little loops together on the needles she found distraction. In *Villette* the impetuous Emanuel desires Lucy Snow to drop every stitch of work that is not intended specially for him. Many people would have to go bare-shod if all the stitches were dropped that are not theirs by right. If the moments of distraction, of despondency, that are knitted into even rows were to be taken away from the wearers of the silken chains, and purses, and woollen socks—the hopeless regrets knitted away in dumb records of grey, and red, and white wool—little Tom Rowland, for one, would have his toes through. But by degrees, as she worked on, his mother grew more quiet and more calm; her flushed face softened to its usual placid sweetness; the lights of the fire were shining on her hair; the comfortable warmth soothed and tranquillized her; and she sat at last, working much as usual, the very personification of rippling silken prosperity, installed by the fire in Mrs. Brandiscombe's own chair, the deep folds of shining black, warm in the red firelight, the needles gleaming as they crisscrossed each other on their journey.

III.

Meanwhile a grey December day is mistily spreading over the great bare plain in front of the house, across which Mrs. Brandiscombe's fat horses trot daily. It is all sandy and furze-grown, with pools gleaming black and white, and dull green prickly things growing. The roads travelling across the plain go floundering from white sand into yellow mud. Here and there in the mist some stunted slate-tiled house is standing. It may be warm within and dry and light; from without those lonely tenements look like little coffins lying unburied. The clouds are hanging over the plain; towards the sea they seem to break, and some of their misty veils are parting and swinging on a low gusty wind.

Two figures are trudging along the road—two people, tired of sitting at home, who have come out to refresh themselves with clouds and stormy shadows, and rain-gusts, and dead furze. One of these people—the Archdeacon, who married Fanny Brandiscombe—walks regularly for a constitutional; he has an objection to getting over-stout. His companion, Miss Janet of the red petticoat, is the daughter of a less prosperous parson than himself, who married the Archdeacon's sister twenty years before. As the girl walks along her quick feet almost pass the heavy-gaitered steps; all the damp grey fogs and mist seem turning to roses on her cheeks; she has high arched eyebrows, stiff hair, circling grey eyes. Far off in the distance comes a third person pursuing them: the gentleman in the country gaiters, who is trying to meet them at the cross-road. He had come out oppressed by a sort of day-mare of chairs and tables; and by the exhausted atmosphere of human sameness pent up for twenty-four hours in Mrs. Brandiscombe's country-house, and by the thought of a meeting that seemed to him very ill-timed, and for which he did not feel prepared just at that special moment. His is a consciousness with a strain in it, an impetuous, and yet self-doubtful nature. No one would have suspected it, seeing the tall erect figure, the firm striding step. For my own part, I believe that strain to be the saving of an overbearing character. Hollis was not quite true to himself or to his own theories—sceptical as he was by way of being, self-interested as he announced himself, hasty in conclusion as he was; this mental reservation seemed to be a chink in the wall through which the light might penetrate. The little rift may be for good as well as for bad. Mr. Hollis, seeing a red dab of colour and a black dab through the mist, hurried along as quickly as he could, with his faults and virtues, crossing stones and ruts and rucks on his way, and vaulting over a stile, and he soon approached the pair, who were proceeding together apparently, but in reality straggling off to very distant cities and thoroughfares, and talking to each other in two different languages that neither could understand.

"I am very sorry, Janet," the Archdeacon was saying, with his nose up in the air (it was not unlike his niece's). "You do not suppose that I have not weighed it well over in my mind? It gives me the greatest concern to refuse you, and I heartily hope that no other vacancy will ever fall to my gift. Your father, with all his good qualities, is not the man for this one. There would be a general outcry; he would be the last person to wish me to act against my CONVICTIONS." The Archdeacon stepped out briskly, but his companion kept well up with him.

"*He* would," she was saying; "he never thinks of himself. But you know how good he is, uncle John, and your own convictions can't be changed by an outcry. And truth is truth, and if I were an archdeacon, and you were papa, I wouldn't mind what a few hateful, stupid, narrow-minded people said," cried the girl, more and more excited.

"I am very sorry, my dear, but it is my duty," began her uncle.

"Oh, uncle John, are you quite *sure* it is your duty," implored the girl, eagerly, "and not that you are afraid? God gives one one's relations——"

"And a conscience too," cried the Archdeacon, with a stride, angrily, "though you seem to have none. Enough of this, Janet. You can reserve your persuasions for Hollis; he is not a churchman, and may consult his inclinations. Ask him; Holmsdale is in his gift."

Janet blushed up, a deep red furious blush, and jumped, with a bitter pain suddenly in her heart, right away from her uncle's side, across a great pool that was lying reflecting the cloud-heaps. How desolate it all was: some smoke was drifting from a distant factory chimney; some figure far ahead was crossing the furze; some distant cock was crowing a melancholy crow; and the wind came fluttering against her face, and the tears started from her eyes.

"There are not two rights," she was thinking, indignantly. "Uncle John thinks that people get on best in both worlds at once. They don't, they don't, and he doesn't love his neighbour as himself, and he *ought* to help papa. I know it. How *can* he expect me to ask Mr. Hollis for his living. I can't, I won't—now of all times. Oh, how unhappy I am! Oh, how foolish I have been! Perhaps I shall forget about it all when I get home to my poor papa. Oh, how disappointed they will be." The grey eyes were still filling with tears, but the tears did her good, as she rubbed them away with her gauntleted fingers; she felt a hard gulping sensation in her throat, but she choked it down somehow as she hurried on.

Janet was an odd matter-of-fact young person, with a curious amount of courage in her composition. She was very young. She was not afraid of pain. She would inflict it upon herself with a remorseless determination. She was oddly defiant and mistrustful for her age, for she was very young—only eighteen, and young for eighteen. She looked upon herself as an experiment. We most of us have a vague idea of some character that we enact almost unconsciously: some of us look upon ourselves in the light of conclusions (this was the Archdeacon), others of tragedies, others of precepts. There are no end to the disguises and emblems of human nature. I have a friend who is a barometer, another a pair of slippers, another a sonata. I know a teapot (fem.), velocipedes of both genders, a harlequin, and a complete set of fire-irons. Mrs. Rowland might be looked upon as a soft hearth-rug comfortably spread out in the warmth of the blaze.

Meanwhile the experiment is hopping about in the bog, with stiff elfin locks blown by the winds, and grey eyes fixed. "Janet, come back into the pathway," says the Archdeacon, "and don't be foolish." Janet, who is used to obey, and who had spent a great part of her life under her uncle's orders, comes back, but she can't walk with him—she is too indignant for that—so she passes on in front, going on meanwhile with her self-experimentalizing. While the Archdeacon, not sorry to lay hold

of a grievance, continues, "Yes, in my days young women did not set so little store by the advice of their superiors." ("Uncles" did not sound well.) "You think there is something specially heroic in leaving at a time when your prospects may be materially affected—I am obliged to speak plainly—in leaving when your influence may be most important. Janet, I will not have you look at me like that. I think it is an act of headstrong self-will."

"Uncle John!" cried Janet, indignant. She was not afraid of pain, as I have said, and this was about the limit. She had a sort of curiosity to discover how much and how far she could bear. She had been well drilled in a school of repression and patience. Her mother was a whole course of such an education; her father's conscientious zigzags were another lesson in the art; to say nothing of money troubles without end, affairs going wrong, tempers going wrong, small store of sympathy at home, and now—now it seemed to her that her own troubles were in addition to all that had gone before. Whatever it all meant, Janet was determined not to yield weakly and meekly. What did she care for being unhappy? She could bear it as others had done before her. But she did care for this, that she should not lose one atom of the honest self-respect which was her own as yet,—the self-respect that was her right, her inheritance. Why should she put herself in a place to forfeit all of this? She was not pretty, thought Janet of the circling grey eyes, rings of grey and black under straight dark brows that were knit. A day or two ago—well, a day or two ago, she had been foolish and vain, and when her uncle, in his pompous, bungling way, said something about the reason why Mr. Hollis was staying on, she had only laughed in a delightful consciousness of power; but to-day she had heard a little word from Mr. Hollis himself that had first opened her eyes and disabused her—a little impatient word about hating the place and having no reason to like it; and as he spoke her experiments upon herself had begun that instant. The resolute Janet gave herself not one moment's thought, she shut the shutters as it were, pulled down the curtains, shut out the early dawn in her heart, tried to forget what growing sunlight gleam she had seen for an instant with dazzled eyes.

The Archdeacon, as he followed her, was also in no very pleasant state of mind. He was picking his way mentally as well as actually: on every side were pools and stones, and dangerous splashes. He was a kind-hearted man, and greatly troubled, although he would not own it to himself, and he clung to his conscience, which happened to be keeping to a moral sidepath out of the mud. He knew that for years his sister—poor Isabella, Janet's mother—had been looking forward to this living to make up to her for all her long troubles and anxieties. It was to make arid places fertile; to feed, clothe, teach the children; to steady the wavering faith of her husband; to raise them up from the depths into which their little home had been sinking, over-weighted as it was with anxieties, ill-humours, and children

and debt. Once the Archdeacon himself had looked forward to this deliverance for them all and his favourite Janet in particular; but now, in these troubled and dangerous times, to set a man like Tom Ireton—who never knew his own mind, and was converted by every ranter he came across—to set such a man as that to stem the dangerous current that had lately set in at Chawhampton, it was impossible; the whole country would cry out against it. Opinion didn't matter at Merton-le-Mere (this was the name of Janet's home); the country louts had no opinions beyond their cider and their pitchforks. Tom might preach himself black in the face, and they would be none the wiser. But at Chawhampton—it was impossible. The Archdeacon had a copy of the letter in his pocket in which he offered the living to Dr. Phillips—a man of his own mind, liberal, decided, with clear views of the future, as well as of the present; a man, like himself, fully awake to the importance of checking the dangerous advance of the tide.

"Tom writes that he has always spoken his mind, that he does not know what is coming, that he looks upon change as one of the fundamental laws of the universe. A clergyman has no business to look for change," the Archdeacon concludes; "and if he does he should not say so; if he says so he cannot possibly expect that I should give him my living. And this tiresome girl is as headstrong as her father."

And so they walked on for a minute or two, splashing through a slough of despond, far away from Coombe Common.

"It won't matter much being a little more or less unhappy," was Janet's conclusion. "I shan't mind very much. I don't mind things as other people do," and the girl turned away from the almost irresistible visions that seemed to pierce even through shutters and curtains. "Go, go, go; such things are not for me. I'm not a bit ashamed," thinks Janet. "There is no particular merit in being happy and successful. It's not for me, that is all. It is women like Mrs. Rowland who are made to be happy. Ah, how happy they must be." And Janet felt that though she might not look at it, that a dawn *was* there for some—for those who were outside in the bright open, watching from their vineyards and illumined by the golden beams.

IV.

"Here is a friend," said the Archdeacon, not sorry for the arrival of a third person, and calling Janet back with a start to the ruts, the mist, the common, as Hollis caught them up. Now that Hollis had come into the vista it seemed brighter to the girl than any sun-gilt paradise that she had been imagining. Indeed, the chances of life, unexpected and sad as they are, are also more satisfactory at times than the brightest visions of an ardent imagination. For visions partake always more or less of the visionary, and are hackneyed and incomplete just in those things where he fails himself. Reality comes with a wonder of novelty and a fresh

strength of its own, with a vividness that the dearest visions fail in. Has it ever happened to any one of us to ponder over some hopeless problem, over and over, and round and about, and at last in despair to give it up as unsolvable, and suddenly one day the door opens, a living answer enters, more complete and satisfactory than any we could ever conceive? The difficulties are over, the thing we could not realize is there before us. It may be a love that was wanted, or an intellect, or a strong will, or a friend, or a sympathy. There it is; no effort of yours has brought it, it has come; and the want being there, the new power is absorbed into the vacuum.

Janet had been facing the wind; when her uncle spoke she turned with bright looks, and stood straight, with flapping grey wings, waiting for Hollis to come up to her.

Brown-legged and black-bearded, with cheerful looks of recognition, the young man arrived across the sea of rain and chalk. As he looked at Janet it struck him that there was a something about her that he had never noticed before; something simple, noble, self-reliant. He thought as he came up that he had never done her looks justice, for he had never thought her even handsome till that minute. And Janet? At that minute she felt that she was free; she might feel some pain, there might be more to come, but she was free, she was no one's bondmaid.

"If you are going through the wood," said Mr. Hollis, cheerfully, "I can walk with you as far as the lodge."

"Is that on your way?" said the Archdeacon, stopping short. "Are you going to the Merediths now, or coming back to the house?"

"I am going now," said Hollis: "she begged me to come early. There is a short-cut from the lodge. I said good-by to my hostess before I came away, and told them to send on my things. I wonder what there is we could say to Miss Ireton to induce her to come over?"

"Janet does not know her own interest," said her uncle, testily, "when she persists in refusing such a very pleasant and well-timed invitation."

The Archdeacon's speech was anything but well-timed. Janet drew herself up.

"I am very sorry, I am wanted at home." She had taught herself her lesson and could repeat it very glibly. As she spoke they had come to a gate, and George Hollis, who held it open for her as she passed, looked at her fixedly for an instant to see if this was a real reason or only an excuse. Janet saw his doubtful look, and her two eyes fell, and her bright cheeks blushed for her and then for themselves. Hollis with some temper let the gate go when she had passed. She was making an excuse,—she did not come because she would not,—she would not because . . . There was no accounting for the vagaries of girls. Miss Ireton had guessed at his displeasure; she looked up defiantly—what was it to her? Then her heart smote her, for it was not a very hard one. "Don't think I am not very sorry," she said. "Who could help being

sorry? I shall never forget this happy time." The Archdeacon had waited behind a little to examine the gate; it was a curious hasp, and he wanted one of the same put up in his field to keep out irreverent cows.

"I am so used to come and to go," said Hollis, in a snappish voice, "that I leave fewer regrets behind me than you do. I have no special reason for liking Brand House." It was a cross speech, and only meant that he was offended. Janet thought it meant, not that he was offended, but utterly indifferent. It did not pain her much. This was what she had been expecting ever since her little talk with Mrs. Brandiscombe. The Archdeacon still lingered and the two young people walked on in silence. They had left the common behind them at last, and come into a wild green park. It seemed the last vestige of the thick woods that had once covered the country, reaching down to the sea almost. Janet, with an impatient, quick step or two, had gone a-head,—a bright figure against the gloom, the grey, the mist: the branches seemed heavy with it, ivy tendrils glistened in the damp, the mosses were green upon the silver trunks, and the lichens were opening wide their grey mouths. There was a faint aromatic scent in the air from the many fir-cones and spikes; from the golden drops of turpentine that were oozing from the bark; from the damp sweet decay all about, of dying leaves and spreading creepers. And then above were the bare branches, full with the buds of the coming spring; decay, and life, and change, in a sweet, subdued, silent glen, where the dim daylight came dimmer still through the crossing rustle of the beech branches. "This is a lovely sort of Hades," said Hollis, coming to himself again, and looking about.

"I believe it is Meredith's property," said the Archdeacon, who had caught them up; "the place wants thinning, but I can quite understand a man's reluctance to cut down his own trees."

"I shall ask him what he is about," said Hollis. "I know the place of old. I used to come here when my father lived at Portsmouth."

Janet heard so far, and walked on faster to get out of the sound of their voices. Every word and every little event that had happened for the last hour or two, seemed to confirm her more and more in the new interpretation that Mrs. Brandiscombe's words had given to the small events that were so interesting to her. She had been played with, she had been used as a screen to conceal real feelings and interests that were unknown to her. . . . Her bright cheeks blushed with shame as she rushed along, her grey eyes had an odd misty look of anger in them, she picked up a dried stick, upon which some little lichens were clinging still, and began beating it against the stems on either side of the pathway; it soon broke; and she flung the pieces away impatiently. A word had been enough to make her happy, a word had been enough to disabuse her. And yet it was hard, she thought, that this her last walk should be so spoiled; he might be friendly just this last time. And then she waited for them to come up and tried to make friends again, speaking of one thing and

another, for she was thinking they might never meet again. Among other things she asked Hollis if he had ever met her friend Mrs. Rowland.

"Is it a case of devoted ladies' friendship?" the young man asked, in his turn.

"Why do you laugh at women's friendships?" said Janet, gently. "Mrs. Rowland would do anything for me." And then she added, with a fierce look at the poor Archdeacon, "I don't think the kindest men do things only because one asks them. I had much sooner trust a woman."

Janet felt quite ashamed, because, instead of snubbing her, the Archdeacon interposed quite mildly—

"My dear child, that is because you are utterly unreasonable, every one of you, and never stop to think of the obstacles there may be in the way. Mrs. Rowland is charming, but she would be just as unreasonable in granting as you would be in asking."

"I think men invent obstacles," said Janet, mollified a little, "for the pleasure of thinking themselves reasonable in not overcoming them."

"I wish you would try *me* some day, Miss Ireton," said Hollis, laughing; "I should like to do something, reasonable or not, and prove myself as staunch a friend as Mrs. Rowland."

He wondered why a look of pain, followed by a burning blush, came into the girl's face. Instead of answering, she looked away down the long dim avenue by which they had been coming. They had reached the little lodge by this time, where their roads divided. Janet's heart began to beat a little; she felt her uncle's mild inquiring glance fixed upon her; she felt as if she hated him almost at that instant. How could he expect it; how could he allow her to humiliate herself by asking strangers for what was his own to bestow! It was all horrid, all except Hollis's kindness. She clenched her left hand tight as she suddenly said "Good-by; I am tired, I want to go home. Please don't come back with me," said the poor child. "I had rather go back alone; I should like it best."

She was too much in earnest to be other than cold. Hollis looked disappointed. The Archdeacon, who had been counting on this final walk to bring about some sort of explanation, looked annoyed. He offered to walk on a little way with the young man, feeling it was his part to make up to him for Janet's ungraciousness by every little attention in his power. Notwithstanding his wife's demurs and Mrs. Brandiscombe's solemn head-shakes, he had been of opinion that Hollis was very much attracted by his young niece. It was a most desirable thing in every respect; and if Dr. Phillips accepted Chawhampton, Holmesdale, his present living, would be in Hollis's gift, &c. &c. Poor Janet! She walked away for a little distance, and then she stood for an instant looking back after Hollis and her uncle. Her heart was very heavy, her steps lagged dull and wearily. She might have stayed; she might have seen him again and again; but now she was going to—

morrow; it was all settled; it was good-by! Had she done right? Alas! how could she tell; why was she not as other girls are, befriended, advised, and comforted? why was she all alone to work out right and wrong from this tangle? "I should like to do something, reasonable or not." Ah, what did he mean? Only kindness, only friendship. If she asked Hollis to help her, this was clear—she could never see him again; never, never. What, another gate? She tried to open it; it was stiff, and hurt her fingers. Janet stamped in a sort of despair. Give her a living! She might as well ask Hollis for the moon. She looked back once more: there were the two dark figures, walking away with all her best hopes, at the end of the long dark alley; then she got the gate open and trudged on. Everything seemed changed: no life, no promise, only decay; the leaves were rotting all about, a great gust of smoky mist seemed falling upon her, the little laurel-bushes alone looked green and flourishing. Janet was shivering by the time she got to the house; she was jaded and tired. Bodies are apt to be dull when the spirits are weary.

V.

Janet's was a big state-room at the end of the passage, with tall windows looking blank out upon the mist and the laurel-walks along which she had just come. There was old-fashioned furniture, in stately preparation for the guests who came to inhabit it; there were medicine-spoons of every shape and size, medicine-glasses, cap-stands, leg-rests; there was a sofa, with various-shaped cushions; there was a boot-jack. It would have all seemed more suitable to one of the dowager ladies, Mrs. Brandiscombe's contemporaries, than to Janet Ireton, who did not require any of these appliances. She threw her hat upon the great four-post bed; she fell into the great arm-chair, and sat curled up in the seat, with her head resting on the arm and her hand hanging over—she tried to think it all out calmly for herself, but her heart beat almost too impetuously. Here was the case. She had been a goose, and had fancied that a few civil words meant a life-long devotion. She was not ashamed of herself; she had found out her mistake in time, and instantly determined to avoid any possible misunderstanding in future. But now, to do as her uncle wished,—to ask Mr. Hollis, whom of all other people in the whole world she wished to avoid, for so great a mark of favour,—ah! it was too much; she would not, she could not. Then Janet thought no more, but sat staring at the great pier-glass; then she jumped up, and began walking round and round the room. Why did everything seem to jar upon her? Her dress caught in a table-corner as she went along, she shook it free impatiently; a chair stood a little crooked, and the slanting lines worried her, but when she had put it straight she was no calmer than she had been before.

Janet of the even nerves could not understand this strange new phase. It frightened her and horrified her. She found herself asking

herself, "Why did he ask me so often to go to the Merediths' ? He could not know, he did not know, how hard it was to refuse. Ah, it was cruel, yes, cruel, to make such a play—if it was play." A deep, burning blush of indignation came into her cheeks, as she felt in her deepest heart of hearts what happiness was *not*. She would not trust herself to think what it might be. Ah, if she had any one to go to now, as other girls had,—girls who were loved and sympathized with, and comforted, and guarded from harm. Her father was no guide, dearly as she loved him. She loved her uncle, but she mistrusted him ; he was too complicated a mind for a straightforward nature like Janet's. Her home was a house full of cracks and darns to be repaired, and children to be patched and borne with,—not much else ; her mother's love was with the boys.

Then, of course, came a reaction, and the thought that, though Mr. Hollis's civil speeches meant nothing in one sense, they might mean something in another. He had said he would gladly help her ; perhaps he meant what he said. He could not know of her father unless she told him. It was her duty to do what she could, even in a hopeless endeavour like this one. Should she ever forgive herself if, because it was horrible to speak, she was silent, and by this silence did her father an injury ? It was a shame that she should have to do such a thing ; she who had always held her head so high, and vowed that no poverty, no trouble should ever bring her low. Janet stamped impatiently at the thought. Then came a ray of relief. She should not see him again. But she might write, said her officious conscience ; she might send the letter by the messenger who carried over his luggage. The poor persecuted girl ran with a sort of leap across the room to the writing-table, where the old ladies were accustomed to carry on their correspondence in their delicate old-fashioned handwriting, "hastening to reply to one another's favours of the 14th, and to announce their safe arrival," &c. Poor Janet began writing in a desperate hurry, flying over the paper as if afraid that if she paused for one instant her courage would fail, her pen fly away, her paper slip from under her fingers :

"DEAR MR. HOLLIS,—I am going to take a great liberty ; if you never forgive me I cannot help it. I feel I *must* say what I am going to say. Perhaps if we ever meet again you may tell me that you do forgive me, though I almost fear that this letter may make you think ill of us all.

"I am going home to-morrow to my father, who is the best father, the truest gentleman, that ever lived. He is very very anxious and suffering, and for years we had hoped that my uncle would have appointed him to Chawhampton when it fell vacant. This he now says he cannot do, and he has given it to Dr. Phillips, the vicar of Holmesdale. Will you give papa Holmesdale ? You do not know how good he is. He speaks what he thinks. My uncle calls him impressionable and unguarded. I do not want to belong to a guarded religion, but then I am my father's daughter ; a minute ago you said, 'If ever I can do anything for you.' I know it meant only commonplace service, not this. I know I am grasping and presumptuous. What can I do ? how can I not ask you when I think of my dearest father's many many cares ?

"Yours truly,

"JANET IRETON."

Janet did not trust herself even to read the blotted page. It was blotted, but she dared not write it out; she sealed it up in the envelope, and then threw the letter from her on the floor; and then, flinging her head down over her arms upon the table, she burst out crying, sobbing, as if her heart would break. Her pride seemed hurt, crushed, soiled; her maiden dignity seemed sacrificed. Any one, any one else in all the world she could have asked without shame, but this pang was like heart's blood given drop by drop. Had he not wounded her already, made a play and pretence of his liking for her? Before this there might have been a chance that some day they might have met again and been friends. Now, never, never; she would never see him; she had humiliated herself before him; she would avoid him, hide out of his way. "Oh, papa, my dear papa," sobbed Janet, with another great burst of tears.

A noise in the passage outside reminded her that there was no time to lose, and she ran out to stop a servant and to ask if Mr. Hollis's luggage was going to the Mount.

"The luggage has gone, ma'am," said the housemaid, placidly. "Would you please to like your fire lighted?"

"Gone!" repeated Janet, stupidly. It seemed impossible that when all the powers of her mind and will and conscience had been brought together to write the letter, so small a thing should come to prevent the fulfilment of her scheme.

"It is an omen," thought the girl, that I need not send the letter. "Yes, please, light my fire," she said to the housemaid, and a momentary thought of relief unspeakable, of a burning letter, of a mind at ease, came to beguile her.

The maid came back in a minute, saying she had been mistaken, the cart had not yet gone. Was that the letter?—(poor Janet hastily dropped her composition into the woman's hand.) The butler had desired her to say that Mrs. Rowland was in the drawing-room, and had been asking for Miss Ireton.

Caroline come! This was, indeed, a ray of comfort in all Janet's despairing troubles. What kind fate had sent her? Here was the friend, the adviser, and sympathizer for whom she had been longing.

VI.

As Janet burst into the drawing-room Mrs. Rowland looked up, with a little exclamation of delight, and held out her arms. The widow was installed by the fire. She had not moved for the last half hour or more. While Janet had been going through so much, Caroline had warmed her little feet, smoothed her soft hair, and looked at the clock a dozen times. "My dear child," she is saying, "how glad I am to see you, how delightful this is, what have you been doing? Where have you been? I hoped I should find you. Come and sit down, and tell me all about yourself. Aunt Brandiscombe won't be back for half-an-hour at least." Then they

both kissed each other again, and then came that moment's silence which comes when people's liking for each other exceeds their habit of intimacy.

Mrs. Rowland, in her pleasure, laid hands upon the poker, and was on the point of stirring up the fire to a brighter welcome, when Janet, with a little cry of alarm even in her first greeting, tore it out of her friend's hand. "Not this one, the little black one, Caroline; the bright one is *never* used." Janet had not been so long away from schoolroom restrictions as her friend "Silly child!" said Mrs. Rowland impatiently, relinquishing the shining steel, and taking Janet's soft warm hand instead into her own. Janet sat looking up with honest eyes full of admiration. She had all a young girl's enthusiasm for her friend. Miss Ireton used to think sometimes that Mrs. Rowland was like music moving on continuously from one modulation to another, never hurrying, never lagging, flowing on to a rhythm of her own. "Now I," thought poor Janet, "I go in jerks and jigs; sometimes I stop altogether, sometimes I crash out ever so many false notes." She forgot that she was young, that Caroline had had a longer time to learn to play upon the instrument which had been granted her. Janet's tunes were very sweet and gay if she had but known it. For her there was no cause to fear, but, alas! for those who can never master the subtle harmonies of life! It seems hard, indeed, if all the long, patient practice of years is to produce no harmonious sound; no corresponding chords in answer. Perhaps, though these sad cracked strains to our dull ears may seem to jar so painfully, they belong to a wider song and a mightier symphony than any which we can apprehend.

"Now tell me all about yourself and your people, and everything I want to know," said Mrs. Rowland, settling herself comfortably in the blaze.

"All!" said the girl. "That would be a melancholy story. Papa is more out of spirits, mamma more anxious; and I—I am beginning to think that everything is disappointing, except seeing one's friends sometimes," said Janet, as her eyes smiled and then filled up with tears.

As Janet looked at her, Caroline could not help being touched by the sad looks in the two grey eyes. The widow stooped and kissed the girl's forehead. "I am so glad you are going to be here," said Mrs. Rowland. "I could not bear to think of a *tête-à-tête* with aunt Brandiscombe till Monday. But now I shall have you to support me."

"But you won't," said Janet bluntly and blushing, "for I'm going to-morrow. I have been very happy here—I'm very sorry to go, but I must."

There was a jar in Janet's voice as she spoke which struck Mrs. Rowland, who was usually quick to hear what people didn't say, as well as what they said. She had a great many curious gifts and quicknesses of the same sort.

"You must not desert me in this unkind way," she said. "I want to talk over all sorts of things with you. First of all, tell me why you must go. I had hoped to persuade you to come home with me on Monday, and see my little girls."

"How I should like it some day," said grateful Janet; "but I cannot stay here any longer."

"Why cannot you stay?" said Mrs. Rowland. "You tiresome girl, what is it all about? Is there any one you want to avoid?"

Janet pulled her hand away instinctively. "I am wanted," she said. "I have had a disappointment." Caroline looked full of sympathy, and yet a little amused. "We have been so longing that papa might be appointed to Chawhampton, and now my uncle refuses"—(Caroline looked quite grave and much less interested)—"and you don't know what it is," Janet went on, "to wait and hope and wait, and fail at last. . . ."

The widow sighed. "Waiting! I never liked waiting much," she said.

"Oh, Caroline!" cried the girl, "I have so longed for some one to speak to all these past days. It is so difficult to settle for oneself always, to know what is right, and when it is right to go against the wishes of people older than oneself. Of course I love papa most of all. I would do anything in the whole world for him."

"You must marry, Janet," said Mrs. Rowland, in a cheerful voice, drawing her big chair in a little nearer to the fire. "That is what you must do, then you will have some one to consult with. You must come and stay with me, and I shall introduce some nice eligible young men to you."

"Marry! Oh, Caroline!" said Janet, hurt as young people are who ask you for bread and you give them a stone. (Mrs. Rowland was twisting her own flashing guard-ring round and round upon her finger.) "What are you saying? It is like aunt Fanny, who knows no better—but *you*! Can people marry like that? Is there nothing more wanting?—nothing more solemn and sacred in marriage than a few dinner-parties and an eligible young man?"

Caroline coloured a little. She told herself in her heart that Janet was right, but she only said, "Life is very matter-of-fact, my poor Janet, as you will find; and after all an eligible young man is human though eligible. And now tell me who he is, for I know now there is somebody special in the case."

But Janet did not answer. She was still hurt. Was this the way they all felt—her uncle, her aunt, and now her friend from whom she had hoped for something more? Was this the way they spoke of feelings that seemed almost sacred to her.

"Are you vexed, Janet dear?" said Mrs. Rowland at last.

"No," said Janet, "only a little unhappy. I want to do right and *feel* right, and when I saw you I thought you would help me, for I had no one else to ask."

"Dear Janet, you know I am always ready and glad to help you. Tell me what it is all about," said Mrs. Rowland, leaning forward with a gentle little rustling, and at the same time looks of such real kindness and sympathy that Janet's shyness and stiffness melted.

"It is about papa, as I told you," said she, colouring. "We have so hoped that my uncle would give him Chawhampton, and—and now he

wants me to ask some one else for a smaller living which will be vacant."

"Well," said Mrs. Rowland, "I always detested the Archdeacon; it is just like him; and is there no chance of your getting the smaller living?"

"No; why *should* there be?" cried the girl; "that is what is so horrible."

"Whose gift is it in?" asked Mrs. Rowland, with a faint curiosity.

"It is Mr. Hollis's living," said poor Janet. "He went away just now; he has been here a week; he is gone to the Merediths now. He is very kind, *too* kind; and now, perhaps, you know all," cried the girl, impetuously, who had in those two words said more than she had meant; "but I know I can trust you, and that you will keep my secret. I am talking nonsense, there is no secret to keep. Dear Caroline, I was obliged to ask him. It has been so horrible. But I won't stay; I know I am right to go."

Caroline was silent for an instant. "What did he say?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I did not say it, I wrote it," said Janet. "The letter is going now. You know him better than I do," she implored. "*Can't* I trust him? He *will* understand. He *won't* think it forward?" cried the girl, in an agony. "Caroline, you know the world; tell me I did not do wrong; that I can trust him?" she implored.

Miss Ireton was so agitated on her own account that she did not notice her friend's odd changing looks.

"If you take my advice, Janet, you will trust nobody," said Caroline, coldly, "beyond a certain point. If two people were alone in the world they might trust each other, but think how many claims, memories, doubts, difficulties, there are!" Then Caroline thought for an instant, and reflected upon a past light in her old friend Mr. Hollis's character. She was trying to be true to her friendship, though sympathy she had not to give. There was a moment's struggle and an evil impulse of mischief-making to be overcome before she spoke. For my poor Caroline is no model woman, alas! only a very, very human creature; but she spoke at last, to the best of her wisdom, remembering his old impatience and fastidiousness. Had he not left her for a suspicion? "If that letter goes, Janet," she said, still coldly, "I am afraid you will never see George Hollis again."

"Do you think I ever expect to see him again?" exclaimed Janet, indignant. "I am going away; I will never, never see him any more. There is only friendship or I *could* not ask. There is some one else he loves. It has only been liking for me." Then she went on more fluently, "Just now, when I came down to you, I found another note from Mrs. Meredith, to ask me there. But I shall not go." And Janet thrust a little pink missive, with "Dear Miss Ireton—persuade you—so disappointed all of us—a few days only—ever sincerely yours," &c., into Caroline's hand. Then she covered her burning cheeks from the fire, and sat quite still without speaking.

Caroline, too, was silent. She could not but believe the girl's eager honesty. Once more she felt ashamed before her. She envied her, and a gentler thought of what might have been came to her mind.

As for Janet, she was shaken ; her faith in her friend was not touched, but her faith in human nature had received a rude blow. Could Caroline be right ? was no one to be trusted ? Was this the experience of life that people spoke of mysteriously : not one, not one just man in Edom ? The two sat staring at the smouldering log. Janet's foot was tapping impatiently against the fender, and the obnoxious steel poker came down with a crash. How strangely people feel round and about and under and over the things that really disquiet them. This crash disturbed Mrs. Rowland more apparently than all that had gone before.

"Do take care, my dear. Who told you about this—this engagement of Mr. Hollis ?" she said, sharply.

"Mrs. Brandiscombe told me a little," said Janet. "It was some one he knew long ago ; he himself said something one day. He told me that all his life he had only really loved one woman for years. He said it happened here, at this very house, that he saw her last, and he hated the place. He was called from her suddenly, but she deceived him in some way—never answered his letters. I don't know more of the story. I only know how he loved her."

Mrs. Rowland didn't speak or move, but sat as if she had not listened, with the screen held up between her soft cheeks and the angry blaze ; the screen trembled a little in her hand. At last, with a sudden, quick motion, she got up and walked slowly away to the end of the room where she had been standing when she first entered. Then she came back, smiling sadly. One hand was pressed against her heart. There was a bright very sweet expression on her face that Janet could not see, for she was still staring at the fire.

"Janet," said Mrs. Rowland, in a low voice, "I want to say that I was wrong, my dear, in what I said just now. You may trust George Hollis. I did not do him justice. He is an honourable man. Do not be unhappy. I shall see him to-morrow, and—and try to explain." She was speaking still, and looking intently at Janet, who had started up from her seat ; when the clock struck five, and the butler and his assistant came in with the tea.

"Mrs. Brandiscombe begged that you would not wait for her if she was after five," said the well-drilled butler.

Janet had blushed up, and it was her turn to look a little strangely. "I won't have any tea, my head aches," she said. "Is that the sun setting ? I think I will take another turn. Don't mind me, I—I will come back."

She spoke in a nervous and agitated way, she did not know exactly what had been happening ; but somehow Mrs. Rowland's words no longer comforted her ; even her kindness failed to touch her. She felt there was something between them ; she *almost* guessed the secret. Poor child ! she did not want to know more, and meekly accepted her fate as a matter

of course. But a living, breathing rival there before her was a different thing from the vague imaginations of a possibility. She could not sit quietly and hand milk and sugar. She felt faint for want of air. She caught up a cloak in the hall. She ran down some servants' passage, and out by some back-door into the open air. She did not see as she crossed the hall that some one was coming in at the front door.

VII.

Janet was a proud girl, as I have said. The sort of guess which she had made,—the idea that Mrs. Rowland herself was the woman whom George Hollis loved,—was the last drop in her cup. What had she been doing? Had she been mad, blind, dull? Had she known, she would have bitten out her tongue sooner than have spoken to Caroline as she had done. Poor Janet! She exaggerated, as young people do, the horrors of her situation; she painfully shrunk from the thought. "Oh, I wish I was at home, I wish I was at home!"—this was her one thought now. She hurried out into the garden once more, across the front lawn, round to the back of the house. The air revived her. With the evening the wind had gone down, or if it blew it came in softer and more comforting gushes. Where the clouds had parted over the sea a sunset light was breaking, turning grey waters to blue, gilding pale hills with heavenly alchemy. What was this? A quick gleam—a darting fiery stream from behind the rent cloud. Suddenly the field was in a western blaze; the donkey was browsing in a dazzling, lovely wave of rainbow light. Was this a new created world of cloud and light? Broken, glittering, rainy, divinely fresh, the clouds and the sunlight were parting, drifting, reflecting one another. Here and there the trees stood in the shade; here and there in the sweet sudden radiance the grasses were golden at Janet's feet; a dazzling flame seemed rising from the sea. Janet's hair and clothes were on fire; she felt as if this fresh light were brightening her heavy heart. It stirred with a thrill of gratitude and love for such sweet wonders. As she stood there still, Janet heard the distant stable-clock strike the half-hour. She began to breathe a little more quietly: a few more hours and she would be gone, she thought. Once safe home she would try never to think of this past bit of her life again.

* * * * *

By a not very extraordinary chance it was Hollis coming who had been at the front door in search of Janet. He had met the luggage-cart about a mile from the house, having walked back part of the way with the Archdeacon to finish the discussion of some arrangements which they had been talking over. The cart stopped, the driver, knowing Hollis, touched his hat, and saying, "I have a letter for you, sir," put Janet's poor little scrawl into the young man's hand. Poor Janet! had she known that Hollis had come back to answer it himself, no garden end would

have been distant enough for her to hide in. I do believe she would have splashed straight into the sea to avoid him.

Meanwhile Mr. Hollis had walked into the drawing-room in search of her, and found himself face to face with the very person he had wished to avoid. He thought Mrs. Rowland was not coming till six, and had calculated on a whole half-hour before her arrival. After all it was no very terrible meeting—a pretty gentlewoman, with a kind face and a friendly greeting, a good fire burning, a comfortable chair (the very one where Janet had been sitting) drawn up to it. Who shall describe the half-formed thoughts that passed through Caroline's mind as he came up to her, thoughts of herself, then of Janet, then of self again.

"How do you do?" said Mrs. Rowland. "I hear you only left to-day. I hoped I should see you, though I was afraid I might miss you altogether." She spoke not reproachfully, but with unaffected interest and just a little regret in her voice. Caroline could make the words she used mean anything she liked besides their natural meaning. Hollis, who, to tell the truth, had been unfeignedly sorry to see her at first, for her presence jarred upon him just then, felt mollified by her kindness, notwithstanding the implacability of his disposition. "My aunt will be here directly," Mrs. Rowland went on. "Won't you sit down? We have not met since Florence." Caroline was not kinder than she had been before, but Hollis could not help thinking there was a difference; she was more interested, more agitated, more like the Carry Russell of old days than the gentle, mature, accomplished lady he had seen of late. There was a minute's silence: and Hollis asked after the children, and then Mrs. Rowland began once more: "I am glad to have seen you," she said. "I have been hearing of you from a friend of mine." Mrs. Rowland felt her heart beat violently for a moment.

"What have you been hearing about me?" Hollis asked, with a smile. Caroline resolutely put her old self back into the corner, and then she became quite calm again, and could look up quietly into his face (he stood with his back to the fire for he would not sit down), and try to read what was written there. "Janet was in great trouble, poor child," said Mrs. Rowland. "She had some idea that it was her duty to ask you for something for her father, and that she should forfeit your good opinion for ever." Caroline breathed a long breath as she finished this careless little speech. She had done it. Done her best to help her poor little trouble-hearted sister in her need. Had it been an effort? It hardly seemed to her now that it was one. She blushed, and it was a self-approving little glow from her heart in her face, as she again looked up quietly to see how her speech had been taken.

"My good opinion!" said Hollis, uneasily.

"I advised her . . . not to ask you," said the widow, going on with her knitting as quietly as she knew how. She put in her needles triumphantly and travelled on somehow, but little Tom never wore that particular stocking. "A girl—a very young one, I mean, like Janet—cannot

know life,—cannot guess how the simplest and most straightforward actions may be misread and misunderstood, and the Archdeacon is an old schemer. When Janet asked me if she could not trust *you*, I said that no one was to be trusted."

Hollis looked at Mrs. Rowland more and more surprised. What was she talking about; what was her meaning; was she talking of the past? Surely,—and the old feeling of something like scorn for the woman who had sold herself seemed to come over him,—he had not been to blame or failed in trust.

"But I did not know then," Caroline went on, "that her instinct was right, that I had done you injustice." And Mrs. Rowland looked up with two bright shining orbs. "Something Janet said made me understand it all. Do you know that uncle Brandiscombe told me you were gone, George? but they never gave me any letter. I am glad to meet you, to know how it all happened. I had thought of John before I knew you, but I was very unhappy for a time, though I am not fixed and deep like Janet: but I think my poor John would like you to think better of me than you can have done," said Mrs. Rowland, smiling through her tears. "And you know when I did not hear, I thought you had never . . ." She could not finish her sentence.

Caroline's tears were coming faster and faster. Hollis touched, and surprised, and embarrassed, had taken her hand and kissed it. He was still standing by the fire and looking at the gentle bent head:

"You mustn't think me better than I am," said he, reddening. "I guessed there had been some false play: but your cousin had told me of Mr. Rowland's admiration. I was too proud to ask for an explanation. I don't deserve, I shall never forget your goodness."

As he spoke the sun was setting and the evening lights were shining in, and reflected from the western window with dazzling abruptness from one angle to another in the many dim glasses. For one instant the past was present again to the widow, but only for an instant. With an effort she put it all from her. No—she would be true to Janet and to her own new instincts. She would not try now to take advantage of his old feelings.

"I suppose," said Caroline, wiping her eyes, and faltering and smiling, "there would be no good in living on if one did not every now and then understand things that seemed strange, and learn to be just to old friends, and to guess at things unexpressed as well as expressed in life. I have been happier than I deserve, and this will make my past life dearer to me. But I like to think that I shall do you justice at last, and that you are not one of those who would willingly inflict pain on a true-hearted girl." The next instant she was thankful that she had so spoken, for Hollis began again with some emotion.

"I don't know how to thank you now," he said, "but I assure you I understand your real and most friendly meaning." And then he added, "If ever I may speak for Janet as well as for myself; for to you I will confess that I love her——"

A sound of carriage-wheels, of doors, of approaching voices in the hall, made them both stop short.

"It is my aunt come in from her drive," said Mrs. Rowland hastily. "I saw Janet in the garden just now,—if you like you can go out through that window."

Hollis thanked her with a look, and hurried across the room to the western window, which he opened, and through which he stepped out into the evening gleam. Caroline went to close it after him, and stood for an instant watching him as he went striding across the grass.

Was this all? It seemed a tame conclusion to her few minutes' excitement. He had forgotten her great explanation already, and was hurrying across the field to where Janet was standing quite still in the gleam of the sudden lights. She seemed gazing seawards at the dying reflections there. Caroline could watch her old youthful visions striding away with a more tranquil spirit than in former days. He had loved her once—now he would be her friend—and so she was content. And so with sad yet gentle eyes she watched the two young people that were to live her life, feel her feelings, taking up the thread of her existence where she had left it broken.

Meanwhile out in the field the end of my story, such as it is, is being told in the bright falling radiance, which poor Janet cannot find it in her heart to admire much; she has no presentiment that all may be well, only shame at her heart. The donkey is browsing beside her, but it takes to its heels and scampers off when Hollis comes into the field. Janet does not even look round; she stands quite still, looking at drifting lights, and clouds, and rainbow beams with a pale, scared face. It shocks George Hollis when he gets near enough to see it. He has never seen her before without her sweet natural roses. He comes near and calls her name. As for Janet, seeing him, she stares for an instant—it is so inconceivable and unexpected. Why has he come? Janet thinks where shall she escape, and then all her strength goes; she stands quite still like a maiden of stone or a pillar of salt; it is no use trying to speak as usual or to look unconscious,—she can only stand still.

"I came back to speak to you," said Hollis, in his usual voice, trying to reassure her. "I met the carrier just now, and he gave me your letter. I hope you don't regret having written it," he said, hurriedly. "You don't know what pleasure it gives me to do anything to serve you. I had already proposed the exchange to your uncle when I got your note. Dear Janet, don't look so overwhelmed," Hollis continued, touched by the sudden rush of light and happiness and sweetness in her face; "only give me a right to serve you always, and then you can ask me what you will."

When Caroline came to the window again she saw the two walking, slowly, arm-in-arm towards the house, and then she knew what Janet's answer had been.

At Rome.

WHAT came we forth to see ? a prima donna
 Caressed and fêted by an idle crowd ?
 Or would we do some favoured princeling honour
 That thus we herd so close, and talk so loud ?

Pushing and struggling, fighting, crushing, shouting,
 What are these motley gazers here to seek,
 Like merry-makers on a summer outing ?
 'Tis but the services of Holy Week.

The pious Romans thank the Virgin Mary,
 For pockets heavy and for feelings light ;
 And most devoutly mulet the *forestieri*
 Of a round number of strange coins per night.

The Eternal City swarms with eager strangers
 From every quarter of the busy earth ;
 Who fill the temples, like the money-changers,
 And say some prayers—for what they may be worth.

In never-ending tide of restless motion,
 They come to burn, in fashion rather odd,
 The incense of their polyglot devotion,
 Before the altars of the Latin God.

As flock the Londoners to Epsom races,
 Or form a "queue" to see the newest play,
 So do the pilgrim-tourists fight for places
 Before the chapels in their zeal to pray.

From holy place to holy place they flit,
 To "do" as many churches as they can ;
 And' humbly kneeling, for the fun of it,
 They climb the staircase of the Lateran.

Here a fair maid from melancholy * Erin,—
 Where by Swiss bayonets the way is barred,
 Nor Heaven, nor Pope, nor Antonelli fearing,—
 Breaks through the lines of the astonished guard.

* The epithet rests, it will be remembered, on high authority.

In customary suit of solemn black,
 With string of beads and veil à l'*Espagnole*,
 She means to "see it all;" to keep her back
 Would be to peril her immortal soul.

There a slim youth, while all but he are kneeling,
 Through levelled opera-glass looks down on them,
 When round the Sistine's pictured roof is pealing
 Our buried Lord's majestic Requiem.

For him each storied wonder of the globe is
 "The sort of thing a fellow ought to see;"
 And so he patronized *Ora pro nobis*,
 And wanted to encore the *Tenebræ*.

Stranger! what though these sounds and sights be grandest
 Of all that on Earth's surface can be found?
 Remember that the place whereon thou standest,
 Be thy creed what it may, is holy ground.

Yet I have gaped and worshipped with the rest—
 I, too, beneath St. Peter's lofty dome
 Have seen, in all their rainbow-colours dressed,
 The tinselled glories of monastic Rome;

Have heard the Pontiff's ringing voice bestow,
 Mid cheering multitudes and flags unfurled,
 Borne by the cannon of St. Angelo,
 His blessing on the "City and the World;"

Have seen—and thrilled with wonder as I gazed—
 Ablaze with living lines of golden light,
 Like some fire-throne for Arimanes raised,
 The great Basilica burn through the night;

Have heard the trumpet-notes of Easter day
 (Stones on the lake translated into sound,)
 In strange unearthly music float away,
 Their silver echoes circling all around:

But I would wander from the crowd apart,
 While heads were bowed and tuneful voices sang,
 And through the deep recesses of my heart
 A still small voice in solemn warning rang.

" O vanity of vanities ! ye seem,
Ye pomps and fineries of cleric state,
To make this text the matter of your theme,
That God is little, and that Man is great.

" Is this parade of priestly wealth and splendour
The lesson of the simple Gospel-word ?
Is this the sacrifice of self-surrender
Taught by the lowly followers of the Lord ?

" In that bent form, with lace and gold bedizened,
Wrapt in the incense of idolatry,
Are the old spirit and old heart imprisoned
Of the poor fisherman of Galilee ?

" Do we, who broider thus the garment's hem,
Think of the swaddling-clothes the child had on ?
Grace we the casket, to neglect the gem ?
Forget we quite the manger for the throne ?

" How long, O Lord, how long ? Must then for ever
The idle throng deface thy sacred walls ?
Will mighty Rome throw off these trappings never ?
Oh, of her prelates and her cardinals

" If there be one who with his faith not palter,
But holds the truths divine not taught in vain,
And if about her desecrated altars
One shred of true religion yet remain,

" Among their ranks will not the late avenger
Rise, as of old the Saviour rose in wrath,
O'erthrow the tables of the money-changer,
And scourge the rout of mummers from his path ?

" Or will the waters break from Earth asunder,
In some new flood the sons of pride to drown,
And the insulted Heavens descend in thunder
Upon this masque of impious mockery down ? "

While thus in moralizing mood I pondered,
I turned me from the hum of men alone ;
And, as my vagrant fancy led me, wandered
Amid the maze of monumented stone.

The crowd their favourite lions had deserted—
Left galleries and ruins in the lurch ;
The cicerone's glory had departed,
For 'twas the proper thing to be at church.

So at my will I strayed from place to place,
From classic shrines to modern studios—
Now musing spell-bound, where Our Lady's * face
In nameless godhead from the canvas glows.

Now, from the still Campagna's desolate rise,
I saw the hills with jealous clasp enfold
The lingering sunlight, while the seaward skies
Paled slowly round the melting disc of gold ;

Now gazed, ere yet on dome and tower had died
The glory of the Roman afterglow,
Over the map-like city lying wide,
Half-dreaming, from the Monte Mario.

Traveller, do thou the like ; and wouldst thou learn
How Rome her faithful votaries enthalls
With all the memories that breathe and burn
Within the magic circle of her walls,

Leave pomp of priest and track of guide-led tourist :
And drink of history at the fountain-head ;
For living minds and living things are poorest
In that vast mausoleum of the dead.

There, where the stately Barberini palace,
Like some new Nimrod's fabric Heavenward climbs,
Enduring monument of Christian malice,
By outrage wrested from the Pagan times ; †

* The Madonna of Foligno.

† "Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini."

Where, lulled and drowsy with the distant hum,
The sentinel keeps watch upon the town,
And from the heights of old Janiculum
On Father Tiber's yellow face looks down ;

Where in their southern grace the moonbeams play
On Caracalla's tessellated floors,
And rescue from the garish light of day
The Colosseum's ghostly corridors ;

Where Raphael and all his great compeers
Art's form divine in giant-mould have cast,
The very air is heavy with the years,
The very stones are vocal of the past.

Still, as we saunter down the crowded street,
On our own thoughts intent, and plans, and pleasures,
For miles and miles, beneath our idle feet
Rome buries from the day yet unknown treasures.

The whole world's alphabet, in every line
Some stirring page of history she recalls :
Her Alpha is the Prison Mamertine,
Her Omega, St. Paul's without the Walls.

Above, beneath, around, she weaves her spells,
And priest and poet vulgarise in vain :
Who once within her fascination dwells,
Leaves her with but one thought—to come again.

So cast thine obol into Trevi's fountain—
Drink of its waters—and, returning home,
Pray that by land or sea, by lake or mountain,
“All roads alike may lead at last to Rome.”

H. C. MERIVALE.

Easter, 1869.

The Uses of Fools.

MR. GALTON, in his very ingenious book on *Hereditary Genius*, endeavours to calculate the proportion between the number of fools and the number of men of genius living at a given time. If I remember rightly, he comes to the conclusion that there is about one man of genius in a population of a million. Any one who should try to count thirty men of indisputable genius living at this time in the British Islands will probably think that the scarcity is not over-estimated. It is true, however, as Mr. Galton says, that glibly as we are accustomed to talk about millions (especially if we are directors of Limited Liability companies), we seldom realize the meaning of our words. To form a more distinct picture in our minds, let us imagine ourselves to take a walk, after the manner of Diogenes, through this great city, looking for a man, not of honesty, but of genius. By the time we had gone from Hammersmith to Woolwich, and from Hampstead to Camberwell, penetrated every court, and searched every house from garret to cellar—not even omitting the Houses of Parliament—our labours would have been rewarded by the discovery of three such men as we desire. The facts become still more startling when we endeavour to represent clearly the difference between the intellects of a genius and a fool. Mr. Galton quotes the results of certain Cambridge examinations, from which it would appear that a senior wrangler gets several thousand marks, when the luckless “wooden spoon” receives a hundred; and this difference, according to the examiners, is an inadequate representation of the real difference in ability. Thus, if we translate intellectual into physical force, the man of genius would resemble Gulliver in Lilliput—able to take our whole fleet in tow, ironclads and all, whilst the poor crawling mortal of ordinary dimensions would be scarcely able to move one of its cockboats. I have sometimes seen in old books pictures of certain traditionary giants drawn to scale by the side of men of average stature. Goliath was a mere dwarf by comparison with some of these imaginary persons, who were, perhaps, constructed from the fossil remains of whales or elephants; yet the diagrams would be no more than a fair representation of intellectual inequalities. If the mental corresponded to the physical stature, London would, in this case, be inhabited by millions of pigmies—little creatures able to slink through keyholes and creep underneath doors—whilst there would be three towering monsters about the height and bulk of the Victoria Tower. Extravagant as it may seem, there is something to be said for this view of the facts. Compare, for example, the influence exercised upon all future generations by some giant of intellect—an Aristotle or a Mahomet

—with that of the unknown philosophers and prophets who, in their own time, failed to recognize any great difference between themselves and the immortals with whom they rubbed shoulders. Is not the difference as great as between the Coliseum, which stands as a memorial to all ages, and the contemporary cottage which has mouldered away centuries ago into unregarded dust?

I do not mean, however, to inquire into the accuracy of the statement. I am content to assume that it does not contain an entirely fancy picture of the facts. Let us suppose it to be some approximation to the truth, and then let our imagination sink appalled before the vast number of fools in this world, created doubtless for some wise and sufficient purpose. We generally affect to despise fools; yet surely they must have their uses, for they swarm around us thick as those countless germs which, according to Professor Tyndall's pleasant discovery, are entering our nostrils at every breath we draw. For my part, I am disposed to think with awe of the vast masses of folly stored up in this limited planet, and to speculate occasionally upon the advantages of the arrangement. First, however, let us recognize the obvious inconveniences which everybody must remark when the thought first occurs to him. The extreme value of high intellect is obvious from its remarkable rarity; and Mr. Galton, if I understand him rightly, thinks that we should be as thoughtful in raising these prize specimens of humanity as we are in producing perfect racehorses and gigantic pigs. It often occurs to us to depreciate the services performed by men of genius. They make great discoveries; but no discovery is ever made for the glory of which there do not immediately arise two or three plausible competitors. Newton obtained a higher reputation than any human being has ever done in a similar career by unravelling the laws of gravitation. But if Newton had not solved the problem somebody else would have solved it soon afterwards. Dim glimpses of the truth had been caught by numerous observers; and the tools were being daily perfected which brought the task within reach of inferior intellects. The glory might have fallen to the share of another philosopher, or might have been divided amongst several seekers after the truth; but, in another generation or two, the same knowledge would have been attained, and therefore the world at large could have dispensed pretty well with Newton. If this be true, it is equally true that a whole wilderness of such young gentlemen as are annually plucked for their degrees would never have done the work; and that we cannot make a man of genius out of two, nor out of two million, fools. When a great step has to be taken in advance a dozen short-legged people are just as helpless as one. We cannot pierce the depths of space by substituting any quantity of ordinary spectacles for a single first-rate telescope. And thus the fact, that we can dispense with any given man of genius by no means proves that we can dispense with all. The first who comes will unlock the door for us, and will have the good fortune to gain all the credit of the blessings to which we are admitted;

but we must wait till he comes, and be duly thankful for his arrival. Genius, in short, is a treasure of inestimable value ; though geniuses, like humbler people, depend in great part for a recognition of their work upon the fortunate combination of circumstances which enables them to employ their powers to advantage.

In proportion to the value of genius is the enormous mischief done by its opposite. Stupidity is the great curse against which all reformers have to fight. It is melancholy to think how vast a proportion of the energy expended in making this benighted world a little more habitable goes in the establishment of truths with which everybody is supposed to be acquainted, and the assault of evils which have been given up as untenable by every reasoning being. What is the use, one is sometimes tempted to say in despair, of throwing logic before vestrymen, and showing, for the millionth time, that two and two make four? Explain to the ordinary mind by the clearest possible arguments, and by appeal to the most notorious facts, that all men are mortal, and that Socrates is a man ; and invite him to draw the conclusion that Socrates is mortal. He will laugh in your face with the utmost good temper, and declare that he does not see the force of your arguments. Metaphysicians, I know, cherish the belief that it is impossible for a man to believe that A is B, and that A is not B, at the same time. That only shows the danger of arguing from theory instead of observation. Nothing is more common than to find a man resting with the most absolute complacency in the belief of two propositions which are mutually contradictory. The natural result is that human progress is, for the most part, effected by a series of blunders. We carry out, on a great scale, the ingenious theory of education, which rests upon the proposition that a burnt child dreads the fire. It follows that if you let your children put their fingers into the fire a sufficient number of times, they will end by being more careful of those which remain. Or it may be said that we are like a tribe finding their way across an intricate wilderness without a map or compass. We blunder into every track that presents itself, and only give it up when we find, by practical experience, that it does not lead us in the desired direction. Gradually, it may be, we advance, but we waste infinite time and pains in struggling through difficult and devious routes, against which a little forethought might have sufficiently warned us. We went on burning people for holding different opinions from ourselves about matters which neither of us understood, till we found that burning was practically a defective mode of argument. We hanged pickpockets, till it appeared that it rather encouraged the practice than otherwise. We bullied our colonies in order to preserve a spirit of loyalty, till we had thoroughly alienated the most valuable part of our possessions. We still pay people to beg, under the impression that it is a plan admirably calculated to encourage a spirit of independence. History is supposed to be an elevating study, and certainly it is pleasant to find that in some respects our forefathers were greater fools than ourselves ; but it is also melancholy to see how many blunders

and crimes were committed in defiance of the clearest warnings from a few wise men, and yet more melancholy to see how often the wisest of men pursued a line of policy calculated to produce results diametrically opposite to those which they anticipated. It is generally seen that the avowed motives of the rulers of mankind were often different from those by which they were really actuated, and that these last, again, had generally little real relation to the results which they were, in fact, working out. But, not to go too deeply into such speculations, it is plain enough that the huge deadweight of placid stupidity is the heaviest of all the burdens which reformers have to move. Make the lowest strata of the population one degree more intelligent and prudent, enable them to realize the simple fact that there is a to-morrow as well as a to-day, and you would do more to improve them than by all the charitable schemes in existence. Give, to those a little above them, some glimpse of the most obvious results of modern thought, and you would clear away such masses of imbecile prejudice as would admit an unprecedented burst of daylight into the dark places of the world. If we only understood roughly what we were about, we should save some of that dreary application of the rule of thumb, that patching and botching and tinkering which wastes so much invaluable time and energy. And there is enough stupidity in existence to thicken the very atmosphere.

Yet—for I must return to this reflection—there must be some use in a material so widely disseminated. There must be deaths, or, as Mr. Weller profoundly inquired, what would become of the undertakers? Pursuing the same frame of thought, we may remark that there must be fools, or what would become of the ——— ? I leave a blank, which every one may fill up at his pleasure. No one will find a difficulty in discovering a class specially fitted, in his opinion, to prey upon the simpler classes of the community. According to his taste, he may insert any of the learned professions, lawyers, doctors, or even clergymen; railway companies, newspaper proprietors, members of Parliament, shopkeepers, pickpockets, and others, all of whom, though they may not subsist exclusively upon the folly of their neighbours, have, like the old oilmen, more or less of a vested interest in the existing state of darkness. But such an inquiry, like most other inquiries into final causes, would soon land us in inscrutable mysteries. Why we are not as wise as Socrates is as inscrutable as the opposite question—Why we are not all as stupid as baboons? All we can do with our limited intellects is to trace out, in all humility, some of the functions discharged by fools; just as we might investigate the uses of oxygen, without presumptuously inquiring whether our lungs might not have been contrived so as to enable us to dispense with its assistance. We are like children on the shores of the vast ocean of stupidity, noticing its ebb and flow, and dimly conjecturing that it must be an essential part of the economy of the world. A great writer has written the praises of folly in enduring satire; but it is to be feared that he was not quite serious, and I shall not presume to follow in his footsteps.

I will take one or two of the most obvious branches of the subject, and point out how much we owe in some respects to the dulness of the greater part of human beings.

Talleyrand, or Dr. Johnson, or Voltaire, or some other sponsor of unappropriated good things, has said something which I cannot accurately quote about the charms of thoroughly stupid society. There is a pleasure, after a day of intellectual labour, in coming home to talk of oxen. Half-a-dozen clever men, when they get together, almost inevitably begin to aim at brilliant conversation; and brilliant conversation, as a general rule, is exceedingly tiresome. We sometimes lament the loss of the art, and wish that we could have heard Johnson and Burke calling out each other's powers. The wish is natural enough; yet I have little doubt that if any conversation was written down precisely as it was spoken, and not as it ought to have been spoken, it would be scarcely possible to read it. The successful hits have come down to us, whilst the failures have perished; and we rashly infer that the surviving gains are a fair sample of the average staple. The inference is surely wrong. Boswell is always sneering at Goldsmith for his efforts to cut in and shine in the conversation, and laughs at the blunders which ensued when he happened to succeed. Goldsmith's biographers have been very indignant, and have tried to prove that he was really brilliant—as though they knew better than those who had talked to him over a hundred dinner-tables. The true line of defence, it seems to me, would be different. I should admit that Goldsmith's talk was silly and blundering and claim it as a merit. Who does not sympathize with the efforts of a sociable man to break down a monopoly of talk, and still more with the desire to substitute a little wholesome nonsense for sententious epigrams and ponderous witticisms? I have, I confess, a weakness for Johnson which rather struggles against my convictions; but I have a strong impression that Goldsmith's blundering was a pleasant relief even to the great doctor's vigorous hard-hitting; and still more decidedly that it was better than nine-tenths of the talk which generally affects to be brilliant. The old conversational excellence is decayed, partly, I imagine, because we have no longer those small societies in which there was perfect ease, and in which every man's intimate knowledge of his neighbours' weaknesses led to much sharper and closer fencing than is often practicable in a mixed assembly; but partly, too, because we have grown wise enough to know that the value of social meetings depends upon perfect relaxation of mind and the absence of any effort to sparkle and astonish. Jaques showed his deep worldly wisdom in nothing more than his intense appreciation of a fool. The pleasure with which he sucked in the platitudes of Touchstone should be an example for us; it shows how an active mind, condemned to be always speculating and drawing food for melancholy out of every object it meets, may repose upon the vacuous talk of an empty mind as upon a pillow. Fools supply the narcotic element of society; they may be compared to Keats's nightingale; when we hear them—

A drowsy numbness pains
Our sense, as though of hemlock we had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past and Lethe-wards had sunk—

always understanding that "pains" is inserted partly for the sake of the rhyme, and that we should substitute some such word as "soothes." And, certainly, we may add,—

Thou wast not born for death, immortal "fool;"
No hungry generations tread thee down :
The voice we hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown.

But I should apologize for parodying the most exquisite poetry in the language. I only mean to urge that good stupid homely talk is often the most agreeable, and that we have all listened with the utmost pleasure to foolish gossip about trifles, when lofty philosophy, however animating in its place, would pall upon our palates. Of all the wearying talk to which I have ever listened, the most wearying has been that of very clever men with a reputation for conversational ability. There are people who, if they are wanted to take a walk, insist upon turning it into a race; and they are not the pleasantest of companions.

This example, trivial enough in itself, may serve to suggest one of the inestimable blessings of stupidity. Society without fools would be like a plum-pudding without flour—something too strong for human digestion. We should be at each other's throats in a day. Let us suppose, for example—for any hypothesis is allowable in argument—that men were reasoning beings. When anybody laid down a new doctrine we should be able to trace out its logical consequences and see distinctly whither it was tending. We should, in all probability, be still burning every one who disagreed with us. For what is the real philosophy of persecution? It is not really, or it is not chiefly, that we are anxious to force other people to keep to the truth. A lofty and unselfish mind is capable of such an anxiety, but the great majority of mankind possess minds to which neither of those two epithets can be plausibly applied. The more common and powerful motive is our strong desire to persuade ourselves of the truth of our own opinions. When you have burnt a man for holding a particular tenet it is obvious that he must have been in the wrong, or you would have committed a wicked action—a conclusion too absurd to be entertained for a moment. It is said to be a principle of human nature that we hate those whom we have injured. The statement is one which I should be slow to believe, for it implies a large amount of malevolence. But it may safely be said that we regard people whom we have injured with a complacent sense of our own justice and their imbecility; and the policy of persecution is so far intelligible if not precisely virtuous. Assuming then, that we persecute chiefly to strengthen our own convictions, it is fortunate that our sharp-sightedness does not keep pace with our selfishness. If

we burnt people for their own good, as we generally affect to do, we should keep our eye upon errors of all kinds; as we burn them chiefly for our own, we wait until their perverse disposition to go wrong, that is, to disagree with our views, leads them to confront directly or unmistakeably upon some pet doctrine of our own. A man may be working away at some remote corner of inquiry, turning up unexpected results and reversing all the established modes of thought, and we remain sublimely unconscious that so obscure a branch of knowledge can possibly have any bearing upon our own position. Yet it is daily more obvious that there is a close connection between all conceivable subjects of human thought, and that a quiet philosopher who is looking at insects through a microscope or mixing queer-named compounds in a crucible, may be really pulling out the corner-stone of established systems of politics or theology. If we had only known in time how much trouble early physical inquirers were bringing into the world, how many controversies they were introducing, what a biting acid they were pouring upon the consolidated doctrines of ages, we should have sprung upon them and strangled them in their birth. People hold up their hands in horror at the thought that Galileo should have been imprisoned for asserting the motion of the earth. Doubtless it was wrong; but what amazes me is rather the moderation than the vigour of the persecution. If only his judges had caught some dim glimpse of the harvest that was to spring from that little seed of heresy, of the tremendous explosion that would follow when the spark had fairly set fire to the train, they would have trampled it out more carefully than we should try to check the spread of the most deadly contagion. They would have felt themselves in the position of that princess in the *Arabian Nights* who fought the deadly battle with the magician; if she let one seed of the pomegranate escape her notice, she might triumph for a time, but her doom was sealed. Fortunately we are not so quick at seeing consequences. We allow the decisive battle to be fought without interference, because we do not understand that it really settles who is to gain the key of the position. The further we see into the consequences which may be drawn from an argument, the more eager we are to meet the evil at its commencement. For this reason, I sometimes fancy that the most intolerant of all people at the present moment are the scientific men, who, on their own principles, should be most open to conviction. An unfortunate gentleman, some years ago, put forward an heretical proposition as to the movement of the moon round the earth; it was simply, as I imagine, due to a common confusion of ideas, and should have been answered by referring him to an elementary treatise of astronomy. But the wrath which he excited was as though he had risen up at Rome and denounced the authority of the Pope and the Council, or as though he had advocated Fenianism in the House of Commons, or told the St. Pancras guardians that their medical officer was an honest man. *The Times* was filled with passionate assertions of the true faith and pathetic expostulations with our erring brother. A sort of holy

horror seized all orthodox men of science at the bare thought of the presumption implied. Let any one who has the proper martyr temperament try the effect of making questionable statements about the shape of a monkey's brain, or declare that glacier movement is due to some other cause different from that generally assigned, and he will see how vigorous a flame of wrath can burn in scientific breasts. Of course the rage blazes most fiercely when complicated with a dash of the *odium theologicum*; but it often amazes an outsider that people should wax so warm about questions which they know must ultimately be decided by cool reasoning. One cause of this vehemence is that scientific men are accustomed to logical methods, and that you cannot touch any remote outwork of their doctrines without sending a shock to the very centre of the system. Be heretical on the most trifling inference from mathematical investigations, and it is at once evident that you must come into conflict with the fundamental axioms on which the whole science reposes. There is a perfect solidarity between all the doctrines thus bound together, and a touch upon the remotest fibre of the web is immediately propagated to the centre. Luckily the very reverse is full of more exciting topics. We are tolerant because we are stupid. We allow the enemy to open some remote back-door because it is so very small, and do not see that we have admitted him as effectually as though we had flung the main gates wide open: and thus superstitions can be safely attacked from behind, which, if boldly encountered at once, would fall upon the assailant and crush him to dust.

Our stupidity, in short, preserves a convenient twilight; it hangs like a fog over contending armies, which enables the rival commanders to shift their positions, and gradually to occupy important posts without giving the alarm. Huge platitudes grow and flourish beneath its fostering influences, under cover of which almost any manoeuvres may be safely effected. A new opinion disguised under a good sounding truism will often escape detection, and gradually work its way into general acceptance. Before we are aware that any change has been made we have undergone a complete revolution, and wonder, when we look back, like a man who has been walking in a mist and has described a complete circle under the impression that he was following a straight line. But this service, great as it is, is only one of those which we owe to stupidity. It is generally said, and with a certain degree of truth, that men are great in proportion as they are in advance of their age, and catch distinct glimpses of the goal to which things are tending. But it is also to be observed that fools are frequently in advance of their age, and that the fools often make the best reformers of the two. Great thinkers have for the most part the weakness that they can see two sides of a question; they see that a change will lead to certain blessings; but they cannot overlook the evils with which those blessings will be inevitably accompanied. They hesitate and draw back; their native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought; and they are apt to be trimmers, and to

fill the ranks of the moderate party, which in all revolutionary changes is certain to go to the wall. Their course may be the wisest, but it has the disadvantage of being impracticable. Now a good thick-headed, one-idea'd fool is on such occasions of inestimable value. We are accustomed to boast that as a nation we don't know when we are beaten; taken literally that amounts like many other national self-glorifications to boasting of stupidity, and, if the facts be true, it is a very legitimate boast. The Duke of Wellington, who is supposed to have profited by this quality, is in some respects an excellent example of the principle. He was not precisely stupid, but no man, who can fairly be called great, ever had a narrower escape from stupidity. With certain great talents, he had one characteristic peculiarity of fools—that of being provided with a pair of natural blinkers, which compelled him to see only that which was straight before him, and to take the narrowest possible view of his task. The stupidest of men could hardly have been more blind to the real nature of the vast revolution in regard to which he played so conspicuous a part. If we turn to the more humble class of modern reformers we may find more apposite illustrations. As a general rule the thoroughbred reformer may be known by two or three peculiarities. He is absolutely blind to all the charms of venerable antiquity and old association; he looks upon any obstacle which opposes his path as an American backwoodsman looks upon a tree; it is simply an encumbrance to be removed from the face of the earth. He naturally regards all people who have some lingering attachment to beliefs as institutions sanctioned by long prescriptions, as a deaf man regards a musician; they have a sense of which he knows nothing, and for which he cares as little. He has got hold somehow or other of a single idea, good, bad, or indifferent, and is profoundly convinced that its adoption by mankind is the one thing necessary to bring about the millennium. One crotchet does as well as another when it is thoroughly fixed into his brain; for his intellect is of the kind which receives one impression strongly, and is ever afterwards inaccessible to others. Whether the salvation of the human race is to depend in his opinion upon an improved system of drainage, or a total revolution in their religion, is a matter of chance; but having once selected his line of action nothing can turn him aside. The reformer of this type is merely one variety of the vast family of bores; and bores may be shortly described as people who get their own way. Men of poetical sensibility are shocked at the prosaic turn of his mind; they cannot put up with a man who regards every conceivable topic simply in its bearings, say, upon sewerage; who knows not what it is to be weary himself, and is sublimely unconscious of wearying others; and who is content to lead a life like that of a miner, who should always be hammering at one narrow subterranean gallery, never turning to the right hand or the left, and never visited or distracted by the light of heaven. The prevalence of this type gives a certain repulsive character to many sects of reformers; one is perfectly amazed at the narrowness of their views, and the pachydermatous

character of their minds: but one gives way to them in time. They represent force if not light; and one thing more may be said in their behalf. They are generally so dull that their efforts effect little unless they hit upon a really weak place. They are an admirable forlorn hope; they do the preliminary battering which, perhaps, makes a breach for the assault of more cultivated minds; but they require to be backed by men of greater weight to possess much real importance. According to the proverb we should not use razors to cut blocks; fools of this variety may be regarded as the coarser tools which do the rough preliminary work for blades of higher temper. I will not say that all martyrs are fools—for nothing could be further from the truth; but fools are admirable stuff of which to make martyrs, and it is a pity when more valuable material is sacrificed. One of the most unselfish heroes of modern times, who possessed in a high degree this capacity for absorption in one idea, said (and few nobler sayings are authentically recorded) that he was worth inconceivably more for hanging than for any other purpose. It was perfectly true; only that one would be glad if the hanging could always fall to the lot of the stupid. If we could catalogue the men who have done the greatest services to mankind we should find amongst them no inconsiderable number of stupid heroes, whose very stupidity has qualified them to act as the *âmes damnées* of wiser and therefore less simple-minded men. It is a touching reflection that some people sacrifice not only their lives but their intelligence, and become stupid, pig-headed, tiresome, unimaginative bores for the benefit of their fellow-mortals. Remembering that we should often regard a fool as the Eastern nations regard an idiot, as a being whose dull preceptions and slow intellect are the indication of his having been set apart by Providence for working out blessings to his kind, we should value him for his capacities, but take very good care that, so far as in us lies, he shall be devoted to his proper sphere of duty. The great author of the *Praises of Folly* was a far cleverer man than the stupid monks who insisted upon protesting against the grievances of their day at all hazards and without regard to consequences. But the talents of Erasmus would have been of little use without the pig-headed determination of men of the Luther stamp.

We owe an almost equal gratitude to that opposite kind of stupidity which leads to simple Conservatism. According to Mr. Mill most stupid people are Tories, and the Tories, he added, should be proud of possessing so great a social force. There are, indeed, two kinds of genuine Conservatism. There is the man who sees that the creeds of his day are hollow and doomed to decay, but shrinks from abandoning them on that account. He feels that his temples are gradually becoming empty of worshippers, and incapable of retaining the reverence of mankind; but then he does not like the notion of admitting the rough brutal mob to break them down, and defile the sacred places with their coarse ribaldry. He is content to postpone the deluge which he knows must come in time, and is satisfied to be an unbeliever in secret, without promulgating his creed.

from the housetops. The temper was very common in the age preceding the French Revolution; and many men of ability, who did not share the enthusiasm which alone gave life to the old forms of society, were nevertheless anxious to retain them as a practically convenient arrangement. There is much to be said on behalf of this view by all who dread the evils of sudden revolution. But if it were not for the genuine stupidity which continues to believe in what is demonstrably false, the policy indicated would be simply impracticable. There is, fortunately, a great mass of thick-headed honest people, who hold in good faith the positions only maintained by the intelligent for strategical purposes. They supply the backbone of genuine enthusiasm which is necessary to hold any party together across any severe tests; and, consequently, it becomes possible for a revolution to be brought about gradually, instead of necessarily involving a sudden and complete catastrophe. Political and social creeds may continue to exercise a lively influence upon mankind, and to supply the practical requirements of good order and morality until something better has grown up in their place, and till, so to speak, they have been pushed off the branch by the new growth, instead of giving way abruptly as soon as things begin to wither at the root. Progress may be made by gradual development, instead of by a series of jerks and dislocations. But if we were all quick enough to jump at once from premises to conclusions, we should never be safe from the most violent changes. The stupid part of mankind necessarily forms the large majority of every party, though by a natural attraction it will be chiefly on the side of obstruction. Thus it discharges the inestimable function of giving reality and vigour to a policy which without it would too often result in a mere sham fight and a feeble attempt to cover an inevitable retreat.

One other application of the same principle may be suggested. How could society hold together at all, if the great mass were not comparatively stupid? Would people be patient enough to put up with the accumulated misery all around us, if their perceptions were not sufficiently dull to reconcile them to the atmosphere in which they live? Discontent is a highly desirable thing, because without discontent we should have no improvement; but discontent beyond a certain pitch means a general appeal to force and a revolt against all established order. It is, perhaps, well for us all, and especially for those who are comfortable, that stupidity acts as a narcotic, and we may always rely with confidence upon finding any quantities required.

I have ventured thus to sketch shortly some of the uses of fools—employing that word in a tolerably comprehensive sense. Unluckily, “fool” has become a term of abuse, which is rather hard, considering that it includes so large a proportion of the human race. For we have this great satisfaction that so far as the national welfare depends upon our stores of stupidity, there is not the least danger of the supply falling short. I know that great efforts are being made to diminish it. Everybody is to be educated, and all appointments are to be gained by

competitive examination. If this latter proposal be carried out, we shall be in danger of hearing the cry, What is to become of the fools? Is there not some risk, it will be said, in condemning so wide a class to perpetual exclusion from all the honours which the nation has to bestow? We may be thoroughly at ease. I have known many men win high honours in competitive examinations who have come as nearly as may be to satisfying in every possible respect the definition of a fool pure and simple. And with regard to education, the alarm would be still more needless. If every child in the country received the education that is now given at our public schools and universities—a consummation which, moderate as it is, must, I fear, be far distant—he or she might still remain as great a fool as ever. Folly does not consist in being unable to read and write, but in a certain innate quality which no human skill can eradicate; and I will venture to say that as fine specimens of the quality may be found in the upper ranks as in any class of society. Now, if we succeed, as it is devoutly to be hoped we may, in raising the general level of intelligence, would matters be materially altered? We should all be moved up a few degrees in the scale; but the difference between highest and lowest would probably be increased. A general rise of the standard would stimulate the ablest men even more than the stupidest; to say nothing of the fact, which must be soon acknowledged, that there is even more room for improvement in the higher than in the lower branches of education. The essential fact is that there will always remain a huge mass of sheer stupidity to act as a ballast to society, to deaden sudden changes, and to prevent brilliant innovators from carrying out their schemes too hastily. If we were half as certain of preserving our coal as our stupidity we need have no anxiety about the payment of the national debt.

A CYNIC.

Fog-Signals.

IN this land of fogs and mists, where, if foreigners are to be believed, we only see the sun exceptionally, and have often to feel our way about London streets in mid-day, it is necessary to make some provision against the inconveniences that might arise from such an interference with our normal visual faculties. It is true we have not yet hit upon any contrivance for preventing collision of cabs in Cornhill, or for guiding timid women across the great pathless expanse south of Trafalgar Square, on a thick November morning; but perhaps we shall come to that some day. Meanwhile, at any rate, we are taking steps in advance, inasmuch as we have succeeded in diminishing the dangers with which our insular fogs menace some other kinds of locomotion.

In railway-travelling, for example, although the trains cannot, like carriages on common roads, stray away from their allotted line, and so invite external dangers, yet they have to be guarded against obstacles on their own track. This, as our readers know, is effected by the admirable systems of signals—semaphore arms by day, and white, green, or red lights by night—which either declare to the ever observant driver that his line is “clear,” or advise him to go forward with “caution,” or command him peremptorily to stop at once, as “danger” lies immediately before him. But as these signals must, to be efficacious, be seen some distance before the driver arrives at them, their utility depends entirely on the clearness of the atmosphere: in a fog they are of no value at all. But trains must go on in thick weather as in clear, or the traffic of the country would come to a dead lock; and hence it has been found necessary, when the visual power is impeded, to invent modes of appealing to another sense—that of *hearing*. As the noise made by the train is considerable, the signal must be powerful to be heard by the driver; no shouting, or bells, or anything of that *timbre*, would be of use; it must be something much more resonant. The steam-whistle is effective enough as a signal from the train to the road, but as a signal from the road to the train this is, of course, not available. We once saw, on a Belgian railway, an air-whistle, *i.e.* a whistle like those on the locomotives, but blown by air, which a man on the line compressed with a portable pump; but this, we suppose, did not answer, as it has never been adopted elsewhere. Some years ago, however, an engineer contrived a fog railway-signal acting by explosion, and this has now come into general use. It is a small circular tin box, about the size of a crown-piece, but thicker, soldered up tight, and containing a fulminating composition that will ignite on violent pressure. The box has two flexible lead lappets, by which it can be fastened on the top of the rail when a train is approaching. As

the engine-wheel passes over it, the pressure fires the composition, and the force of the explosion bursts open the box with a loud report, like that of a cannon, which the driver cannot fail to hear. One such signal calls his attention; two tell him to go cautiously; and three order him to stop.

These signals may often be heard in thick weather on the railways near London; and in some cases, particularly on the South Eastern between Charing Cross, Cannon Street, and London Bridge, where the continual crossing by the trains of each other's paths renders the signalling of vital importance, files of men are employed in addition, at short distances apart, to keep up a constant communication with the drivers. It is marvellous to our minds, considering the complexity of these arrangements, that so large a traffic has been conducted so safely.

But the mists incident to our climate extend, not only over the land, but over our rivers and seas, and especially near our coasts; and the problem has been one of great importance how to protect our navigation. Fogs are dangerous to this in two ways, first by leading to collisions, and secondly by rendering it difficult for vessels to keep clear of the land, or to find out where they are.

Collisions are much to be dreaded in much-frequented waters, as in many parts of the Channel, and in the entrances and fairway channels of our great rivers. In clear weather the "rule of the road" by day, and a well-considered system of lights by night, are, or ought to be, sufficient to ensure safety; but in thick weather of course both these are useless, and either the greatest caution must be exercised, or the organs of hearing must be again appealed to.* Steamers are generally provided for this purpose with steam-whistles, like locomotives, to proclaim their whereabouts, but sailing-vessels are confined to speaking-trumpets, or bells, or guns.

The other form of the navigation problem, namely, how in foggy weather to convey to a ship navigating near a coast an intimation whereabouts she is, has long engaged anxious attention. If the atmosphere were always clear, the admirable system of lighthouses and light-vessels established all round the coasts of our island would render the darkness of the blackest night no obstacle to a ship's finding her safe path, clear of headlands and shoals, with the same certainty as in broad day; but in fogs and mists the lights, though of the brightest character, are of very limited use, as even the electric ray has but small power to pierce through the dense semi-opaque vapour of which a thick fog is usually composed, and in such a case, before a ship could get near enough to see the light, she would probably be in great danger.

Here again, therefore, the idea of an audible signal occurs naturally, and seamen have long asked whether something could not be put upon prominent headlands and shoals, which might be heard by them in fogs at such a distance off as to warn them of their situation? The

* While this passage is going through the press, a most lamentable comment on it is furnished by the destruction, on the 17th March, by collision near the Needles, in a dense fog, of the passenger steamer *Normandy*, with the loss of thirty-four lives,

authorities of the Trinity House, who have charge of the lighthouse arrangements of the kingdom, have long had this question under their consideration, and have made many attempts to solve the problem. In some places there is a curious natural provision for fog-warning, in the fact that the spots in question, generally islands, are the habitation of large numbers of sea-birds, which make a noise that can be heard far away. The South Stack, near Holyhead, is a well-known example; and in these places the birds are generally preserved and fostered as benefactors to mankind. But such cases are rare, and artificial expedients have to be resorted to. Bells have been tried—we all know the story of the Incheape Bell, and have heard of the Bell Rock, on the Scotch coast; and every yachtsman has passed the Bell Buoy at the entrance of Southampton Water—but the sound of both bells and gongs has been found to be so damped by fog as to be heard only a short distance away. Guns are troublesome and not always suitable; and there has been, until lately, much difficulty in finding anything that would do. A short time ago, however, an invention by an American, Mr. Daboll, was brought to the notice of the Trinity House authorities; and, as it appeared promising, it was tried, with so good a result, that it may probably come more extensively into use as a fog-signal. We have been allowed, by the courtesy of the authorities, an inspection of the apparatus, and will endeavour to explain its construction and action to our readers.

It is a very powerful horn or trumpet, blown by highly compressed air; the sound being produced, however, not on the principle of either of these instruments as ordinarily used in military bands, but on that of the clarinet or the brilliant trumpet-pipes of an organ.

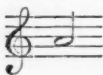
The sound of a clarinet is due to the vibration of what is called a *reed*—i. e. a thin tongue of elastic material, which is placed so as to cover a long opening or slit leading into the pipe of the instrument. The reed is fixed at one end, the part over the opening being left free to vibrate. When the player covers the reed with his mouth and attempts to blow into the tube, the reed, by its flexibility and elasticity, alternately closes the opening and leaves it again, allowing a jet of air to enter the tube every time the opening is free. By this action the reed is set into quick vibration; and the puffs of entering air, following each other in regular succession, and with great rapidity, give rise, on well-known acoustical principles, to a musical tone. This tone is further modified in quality by reverberation in the tube of the instrument, and is greatly strengthened by the bell-shape given to its extremity.

The pipes of what are called the *reed-stops* of an organ are on the same principle as the clarinet; but the vibrating reed is in this case a thin plate of brass, varying in size according to the pitch of the note, but, for the middle tones, an inch or two long, a quarter to half an inch wide, and the substance of a thin card. The mouth of the player is represented by a box, enclosing the whole of the reed apparatus; and the pipe is generally of metal, conical in shape, or with a bell-mouth, some inches in diameter.

The fog-horn is essentially of the same construction as the reed-pipe of an organ, but with all its parts magnified to colossal dimensions. The reed, instead of being a thin leaf of brass, is a thick plate of hard steel, five inches long, two inches wide, and a quarter of an inch thick at the root, tapering down to an eighth of an inch at the loose end. The tube is of brass, eight or ten feet long, gradually expanding in diameter till it finishes in a bell-mouth two feet across. The pipe is placed vertically, its upper part projecting through the roof of the building, and being bent into an elbow, so as to make the bell part horizontal, delivering its sound straight out to sea.

The compressed air for sounding the horn is supplied from a reservoir, into which it is forced by pumps worked with mechanical power. In the experimental apparatus a hot-air engine, of American contrivance, is used for the purpose; but a small steam-engine would probably be a more simple and trustworthy machine. A duplicate engine is required in case of any part getting out of order.

The pressure of air required to sound the pipe is on the same magnified scale as the pipe itself: in an organ, it amounts only to an ounce or two on every square inch; for a fog-horn it is from five to ten pounds, and the quantity of air required at this pressure is very large. It is difficult to believe that any force of mere air would be sufficient to set in vibration the huge blade of steel, as strong and as stiff as a large carpenter's chisel, forming the reed, but there is no doubt of the fact. We can even tell the rate of vibration; for as the note sounded by the horn is somewhere near



we know that the reed must have about four hundred vibrations to and fro per second, this being about the velocity necessary to produce the note in question.

The experimental fog-horn we have described is erected in a small building close to the lighthouse at St. Catherine's, on the extreme southern point of the Isle of Wight; and as this headland projects well out into the English Channel, it is necessary to extend the signals over the whole southern semicircle of sea, from east to west. To enable the horn to cover this large extent of arc, it is made to revolve slowly with a reciprocating motion, so as to present its bell successively in all directions, and to deliver its tone to all the southern points of the compass. The sound is not continuous, but interrupted, at intervals, like a revolving light; at present it sounds for about seven seconds and is silent eighteen, but these times can be altered at pleasure. The revolution of the horn, and the duration and intervals of the notes, are regulated by machinery actuated by the prime mover.

The two accompanying sketches will illustrate the general construction of the fog-horn.

Fig. 1 is a general view. A is the body or tube of the horn, showing its bell-shaped extremity, passing above the roof of the building and bent down at right angles, so as to throw its tone horizontally out to sea.

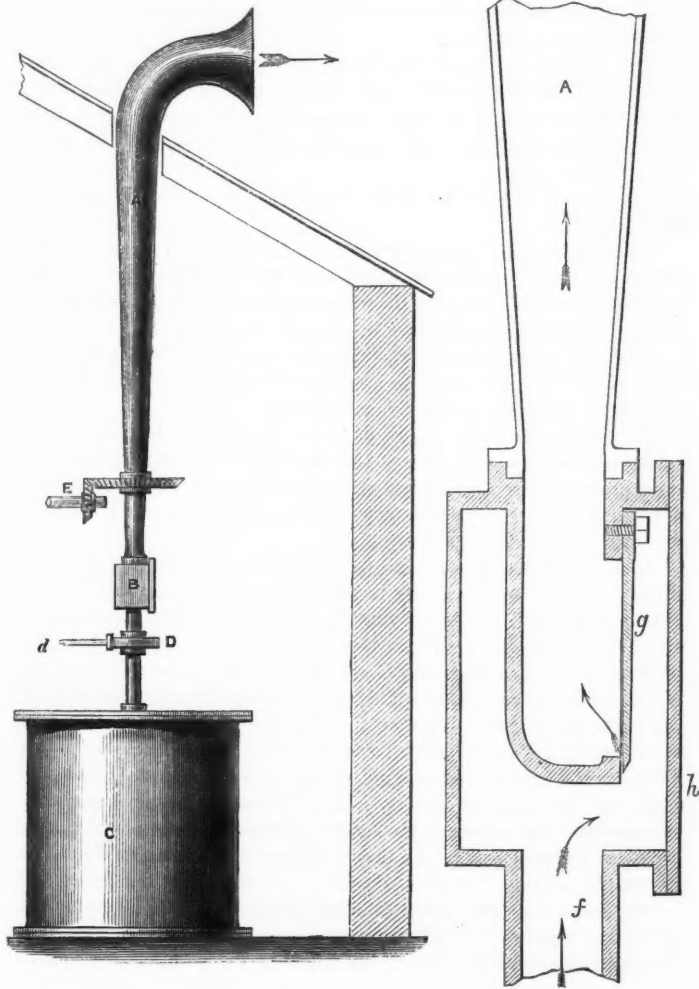
B is the box containing the reed, of which a larger detailed view is given in *Fig. 2*.

Fig. 1.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE FOG-HORN.

Fig. 2.

ENLARGED SECTION OF THE REED-BOX.



C is the reservoir, into which compressed air is supplied by a forcing-pump and engine not shown in the figure.

D is a valve by which the air is alternately admitted to and shut off from the horn, so as to produce the intermitting sounds analogous to the "flashes" of a revolving light. The valve-rod *d* is worked by the engine, so as to give regularly-timed intervals.

E is the machinery by which the horn is caused to revolve, so as to present its bell successively to every point of the compass within its range.

Fig. 2 is a longitudinal section of the reed-box, showing its internal construction on a larger scale.

A is the body or tube of the horn; *f*, the pipe conveying the compressed air from the reservoir and valve below. *g* is the steel reed, fastened to the tube at its upper extremity by a screw, the lower part being left free to vibrate. The direction of the passage of the air is shown by the arrows.

h is a cover, by removing which, access can be obtained to the reed when desired.

This and another fog-signal (we believe the invention of an Englishman and worked by steam) were exhibited at the Paris *Exposition* in 1867, but they were so effective, that the whole neighbourhood protested against them, and they were summarily silenced after the first day.

The tone of the horn at St. Catherine's is very loud when heard in the line of the bell, and seems to have peculiar power of piercing the fog; it is audible out to sea at many miles' distance.

The inhabitants of the village of Niton, about a mile inland from the lighthouse, complained at first of the unearthly noises they occasionally heard proceeding from the establishment; but as soon as they learnt the cause, and found how seldom they were wanted, we believe they, with great good sense, withdrew their objection.

If this fog-signal should prove successful, it will obviously be a great public utility, for it will not only be possible to make it warn ships of the proximity of land, but by varying its sounds, it may be used also to inform them what place it proceeds from, and thus to indicate the geographical position they are in. There is no reason why there should not be more pipes than one, and if these were properly tuned, it would be possible to play a simple tune upon them. Moreover, ships themselves, as well as land stations, might be easily provided with such apparatus, which would be useful also for night-signals in clear weather. One vessel might thus telegraph to another, in the densest fog, or might announce her approach to a harbour on the darkest night, at the same time declaring her name and nationality. So that if, at some future time, we should be startled by hearing "Yankee Doodle," "Partant pour la Syrie," or "Rule Britannia," resounding from mid-channel, we shall know that it is not the voice of any melodious sea-nymph, but merely an American, French, or English ship notifying her arrival by the aid of her fog-horns.



YES, THIS TIME THERE COULD BE NO MISTAKE—THE FAINT, DISTANT BARK OF A DOG!

Against Time.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PICNIC ON BEN-Y-GAIR.



ORTUNATELY all went well, and Mr. Childersleigh went down to Scotland. Very early morning on the 11th of August saw him emerge from the inn where he had slept, to take his seat on the hybrid conveyance, looking an omnibus and christened a mail-cart, that passed Killoden gate. "Rin them out, Tonald," said the half-groom, half-gillie who drove, to his understrapper, with the swagger of the coachman of the Salisbury "High-flyer," regarding the half-starved screws with looks of honest pride; and away they rattled along the street of the old-fashioned High-

land burgh, the charioteer and Hugh, and a couple of plaid-swathed south-country shepherds, huddled up together on the narrow box-seat. A toppling avalanche of promiscuous packages, culminating in a ponderous coil of galvanized wire and an eighteen-gallon cask of sheep-shearing fluid, threatened them from behind, while beneath their feet, among the parcels in the yawning boot, a couple of pointers and a petulant half-caste colley fought and growled and slept by turns.

Sams, fortunately for himself, was not of the party. As for his master, although starting at an hour so matinal as to preclude all idea of breakfast, and contorted into an attitude uncomfortable enough to gratify the spiritual pride of a Fakir, on the whole he thoroughly enjoyed it all. Never in his life before had he breathed an air so fresh, for never in his life had he been penned so long in cities. The horses broke into their very best shambling gallop along the bit of level that stretched by the weed-strewn beach, whence you looked away to the dim hills in the distance over the rippling expanse of blue, blotched by the brown-sailed herring-boats. Thence they turned inland, passing venerable rookeries, and more venerable mansions with the grey smoke curling up from the chimneys in the stirless air; between the trim

beech-hedges, under the covers sloping from the heather hills to the meadows and the cornland; sometimes dipping sharp with both wheels locked, but for the most part pulling more or less stiffly against the collar; crossing bridges flung over chasms where the summer-dwindled streams fretted far down below in their beds of rock, and the salmon, baulked by the too formidable leaps, lolled lazily up to the flies in the transparent pools; past sedge-fringed lakes dotted over with duck and coot, the birds at the noise of the grinding wheels skimming the still surface like grape-shot; till, always mounting, forest-trees gave place to fir, and fir again to the natural birch-glades. Then the road stole its upward way through a chaos of granite-boulders cropping out among the rank beds of bracken and bramble, while over them the white birch-stems gleamed and glistened to the morning sun, their grey-green tresses weeping in the morning dew and trembling in the morning air.

A harder pull yet and a sharper turn, and Loch Loden lay below, playing in and out among the feet of the mountains that cast their shadows on its bosom; with the lodge cowering down on a nook of natural lawn that ran back from the fringe of gravel beach. Like an intelligent man who understood his business, the architect had subordinated the beautiful to the safe and snug, and left his handiwork as little of a blot on the picturesque face of surrounding nature as circumstances admitted. You saw a broad-eaved, low-roofed, comfortable two-storied dwelling, with its stout double casements, and its glass-covered storm-gallery running along the lake front and sheltering the sitting-rooms.

While the traveller was looking affectionately and hungrily down upon the scene from above, the descending vehicle had already been sighted from below. Sir Basil, in a shooting-dress—with little left about him of the banker but some lingering stiffness of manner, collar and tie, was standing by his gate hospitably expectant. His hearty welcome carried Hugh back to the old school-days when he used to jump down there, beside himself with Highland air and glorious anticipations of fun. Indeed, it was mainly for the pleasure of those old associations he had travelled as he had done in the comfortless mail-cart.

"Delighted to see you, Hugh, my boy. We didn't wait breakfast. Killoden appetites, as you ought to know, won't bear regulating by Highland mails. We communicated with the kitchen, though, the moment we caught sight of you, and there are the girls all ready to give you your tea." While the lounging gillies, bustling into life, were descending the paraphernalia, Sir Basil hurried him on to where he had seen muslins and ribbons fluttering in the porch. The young ladies were as blooming as anything he had passed that morning, and beamed nearly as bright a welcome on him as the Highland weather. George, hospitably practical, cut the greetings short, sympathetically dragging his friend off to the breakfast-room.

"Now, Maude, I daresay Hugh's quite ready to listen while you talk, if you only make him comfortable. You may as well get to work on

that pie of Morell's, Hugh, while hoping for other things. Ah! here they come. Which will you begin with, the bacon, the Finnan haddocks, or the kipper? Or stay, just make a sweep of these few chops before they cool. Don't be afraid of them; they don't come from the Cheviots, my *bêtes blanches*. I insisted on the governor importing a score of the small black-faced this season for our own private breakfast-table."

So, with George heaping his plates, Maude filling his cup, and Lucy pressed into the service too, laughingly arranging relays of scones and oateakes, cranberry preserve, and heather honey against what seemed the unlikely chance of his ever reaching them, Mr. Childersleigh, with a luxurious sense of well-being, basked in a Highland welcome, and revelled in a Highland breakfast.

Nor was that opening promise of his visit belied. What is rare enough in this chequered life, each day as it came more than realized the pleasurable anticipations with which he had set his face to the north. Killoden was a very pleasant house: every manner of luxury, and no sort of ceremony; while, as its inmates were town's-people spending their well-earned holiday in the country, they enjoyed proportionately the one and the other. "Upon my word, I envy you fellows this life of yours over here," McAlpine broke in, one evening he had been dining at the lodge, as the gentlemen sat over their wine.

"I'm sure I don't know why you should," returned George. "Putting the deer in Carradale out of the question, your shooting in Baragoil is as good as anything we have, except, perhaps, our best beat by the Blackwater. If I weren't fond of our place for its own sake, I'd change it against Baragoil any day."

"I wasn't speaking of your feathers or your fur. You young men never half appreciate the blessings you enjoy. I don't say a bachelor party is a bad thing in its season, in fine weather for instance. You keep your own hours, and settle comfortably to your dinner without letting the dishes cool while you talk, when you come home with the appetite you've hunted down on the hill. Even for a single wet day now and then it's all very well: you rest your muscles and you write your letters. But the second palls upon you, and the third is the very mischief. Nothing to fall back on but cigars and sherry, and shaking the barometer to persuade it to take a less desponding view of the weather and the situation. Now, none of us three have much of a literary bent, and if Jubbulpore had touched my liver, looking on at Rushbrook and Barrington yawning duets would have given me chronic blue devils long before this."

"Well, but over here?"

"Over here! Why haven't you the ladies?" grumbled McAlpine. "Don't I tell you you know nothing whatever of your blessings?"

"I tell you what, McAlpine," said Hugh gravely, "you really ought to have advice; you look well enough, but I never saw a man so changed. Your liver may be all right enough, but your heart must be affected. I little thought I'd live to hear you talk sentimentally."

"You've lived to see a good many things you didn't dream of, Childersleigh, I suspect. I like to enjoy all the gifts of Providence, ladies among the rest—in their proper place, mind you: but if you go and repeat our conversation, as you're quite capable of doing, you needn't mention that reservation. If you had been out, as I have, for weeks at a time after *shikar* in the Wynaut jungle, with no society but niggers, you'd know the cheeriness of having your quarters brightened up by light or ladies of an evening."

"After all this, Mr. McAlpine, I shall have less hesitation in pressing you to travel over your long seven miles of hill," said Sir Basil hospitably. "But suppose we join the ladies now; really you ought to tell them all this yourself."

"As you please, Sir Basil," returned the chieftain, with a grin; "only they would never believe me if I did. I'm a greatly misunderstood man. Even my chief, Hugh Childersleigh, there, as you see, knows little of me."

"We've brought you McAlpine, Maude, in most eloquent and sentimental vein. He's just been reading us a most uncalled-for lecture on our unappreciated blessings—blessings, in this instance, embodied in you and Miss Winter."

Thrown together for nearly three weeks in the close quarters of the lodge, Maude and Hugh had gradually been shaking themselves back into the old brotherly and sisterly footing. It was very hard for restraint and formality to hold their own against the easy manner of life at the lodge, within and without, where protracted *tête-à-têtes*, rough scrambles, impulsive hand-grasps, help asked for and given, were matters of daily and hourly recurrence. With George, too, treating Hugh as a brother, it was impossible always to remember that Maude was not a cousin at the very least. So in slips of the tongue, not perhaps altogether so involuntary as they seemed, "Maude" fell from the lips instead of "Miss Childersleigh," and the inevitable thaw had followed that breaking of the ice.

"To be sure," Hugh proceeded, "he rather spoiled the compliment by hinting you might become the reverse of blessings in anything but very wet weather."

"All malice, and jealousy, and evil speaking, Miss Childersleigh. Don't you believe him. I'm always misinterpreted or misunderstood, as I told them. Why, we haven't above twice had more than three wet days running during the three weeks we've been here, yet as they tell you I've been quite unable to suppress my feelings."

"I'm very glad you betrayed them, for they are reciprocated, I assure you. Are they not, Lucy?"

"Unquestionably. Only Mr. McAlpine has the advantage of us. We can't very well go over to look for him at Baragoil, or even venture to speak so frankly as he does when he comes to see us here."

"No; that's very true," agreed Maude. "But if you feel so strongly as you say, Mr. McAlpine, why do you come so very seldom?"

"To find you out, every one of you, as I did last Wednesday week ? It was as fine a scenting day as you'd wish to see, Miss Maude. A bright sun and a light breeze ; the birds sitting as if they were on eggs ; and Rushbrook there killed nineteen hares to his own gun before lunch in Strathcollin ; while Barrington, at the back of Cairamore, knocked over a yeld hind and a couple of stags, big as bullocks, heads like bison, brow, brae, and trae antlers ; and I missed it all, coming after you, and went back as I came, without a glimpse at a soul of you."

"He came after Hugh, there, about some Cr dit Foncier business," laughed Rushbrook, "and used most unguarded language at being constrained to do it : nothing at all, however, to what he said when he came home, having found Hugh, and the butler, and the cellar-key all picnicing on the hill."

"Just what I tell you, Miss Maude," retorted McAlpine, waiving the special imputations ; "you make a long eternal picnic of it for those fellows. One ought to take the rough with the smooth in this world ; but, by Jove, you make it all smooth for them."

"You wouldn't have said so if you had seen our boots when we came down from the high beat on Ben-y-Gair yesterday ; would he, George ? As for his roughing it, as he calls it, will you believe it, Miss Winter, he had grouse *salmi*, truffled and piping hot, a full half-a-dozen miles from the house the other day ?"

"My medical men always have told me my constitution needs supporting. I've been accustomed to hot tiffins all my life," explained McAlpine, mildly.

"Really, I'm almost afraid, Mr. McAlpine, after all we hear," said Maude, "otherwise I should have asked you to spend to-morrow in Paradise—to come to a picnic with us at the Lady's Well."

"To-morrow did you say, Miss Childersleigh ? Do you know I've grave doubts as to the weather to-morrow ? I didn't much like the look of it as we drove over this evening. I said so to Rushbrook."

"I can't say I've the slightest recollection of your saying anything of the sort, but I do know you had set your heart on stalking to-morrow in Carramore."

"I tell you what, McAlpine," interposed George, laughing, "if you care to come, we'll combine business with pleasure, and look up the ptarmigan. We can lunch early—call it breakfast, if you please—and afterwards have a long afternoon on Ben-y-Gair. What do you say ?"

"Why, that I shall be delighted," returned the chieftain, promptly. "Don't you believe anything about my plans for stalking, Miss Childersleigh, or think the ptarmigan are the slightest inducement, although McLachlan does tell me they swarm this year on Ben-y-Gair. I'll come over to Eden with pleasure ; that's to say, if Rushbrook and Barrington have made no other arrangements. They don't deserve consideration at my hands, yet I can't very well throw them over."

Those gentlemen, however, assured him they had no plans to disturb,

and would like nothing so much as the picnic; so McAlpine, with an excellent grace, surrendered himself the victim of his civil speeches. The picnic became a settled thing, with the Lady's Well as the trysting-place. It bubbled up in Ben-y-Gair, some 3,000 feet above the sea, and coming from Killoden and Baragoil, you approached it from nearly opposite directions.

The group assembled next morning on the grass and gravel before Killoden Lodge formed a picture not unworthy, in its way, of its magnificent background. Seven or eight sleek, rough-coated mountain-ponies, their bright eyes staring through uncombed forelocks, one saddled for Sir Basil, two more for the ladies, the rest with pads and panniers; three or four boys, bare-headed, bare-legged, in weather-bleached kilts in attendance on them, their eyes as keen and their elf-locks as innocent of comb as those of the "shelties;" McLachlan and half a score of gillies in their rough grey homespun, the shade of the rocks and sheep, and scores of objects in nature, animate and inanimate—a shade that blended the wearer into the landscape at an incredibly short distance. Wiry, good-humoured fellows they looked, with faces kindling at the prospect of the sport and the fun, and something of a common fiery tinge in the complexion and hair that told of temper as warm as their natures. McLachlan's huge black retriever, Bran, gravely did the honours of the green to the company from the house. He superintended the arrangements with the air of dignified ownership, given by an all-the-year-round residence at the place, a dignity slightly compromised when he passed near one of the savoury packages that were spread out on the grass before being stowed away in the panniers. Smourach, the shaggy little fox-terrier, with no dignity at all to keep up, made not the slightest attempt to conceal his engrossing interest in the commissariat arrangements, and with one bloodshot eye half closed, and one wiry leg tucked up high in the air, stood sniffing with intense gusto at the wrappings of a venison pasty. Three couples of black and tan setters, mild-eyed silken-haired beauties, were admonished against the capital sin of *gourmandise* by an occasional jerk from the keepers who held them in leash.

The contingent the house contributed was a less characteristic one, although some of them were well worth the looking at. We have met all the party before, except an officer of Engineers, detached on ordnance survey duty, who, chancing to pass that morning on the mail-cart, on his way to look after some contouring, and visit a party of his men in Glen Doherty, had been waylaid and almost forcibly dragged off by the hospitable insistence of his acquaintance, Captain Childersleigh.

"Good morning, McLachlan," began the young lady of the house. "I told you we should have a lovely day."

"Deed then, Miss Maude, it's a grand morning, but I never like to see Ben-y-Gair with his night-cap on so late and the wind in the west."

"Nonsense, McLachlan; to hear you croak one would take you for a raven. Sir Basil says the glass is fixed at set fair."

"I'm thinking, Miss Maude, it'll be a south country glass, maybe, and not just altogether at home in Killoden yet. Not that I'm telling you it would be a bad day after all, only I wouldn't trust too much to it or to the glass either."

"Why, who would in this climate of yours, McLachlan? If you think you're not going to have my mackintosh cloak in charge as usual, you'll find out your mistake—here it comes."

The muscular Gael showed his white teeth in a paternal smile, as he threw the strap that secured the roll of cloak across the opposite shoulder to that which supported the stalking-glass without which he never stirred from his hearth.

"I'll do that, Miss Maude, though I will say for you, you never were frightened for hill weather yet. But if it does hold up to-day, it will be the better for you and the worse for the birds."

"If you don't mean to waste time, Maude, in making your peace with McAlpine when you get to the well, we had better be moving," broke in her brother.

"Why we never promised him his breakfast-lunch or lunch-breakfast, whichever you call it, before midday."

"And about cooling the wine then. You don't imagine an old Indian like him, a brace of Sybarites like Rushbrook and Barrington, to say nothing of reasoning beings like ourselves, will care to drink it mulled by a sun like this! It will be a very long couple of hours before the ponies land you and the luncheon. It's no light work for cavalry picking its way through the Red Moss, to say nothing of getting up the Giant's Staircase."

"Well, I see the panniers have swallowed the luncheon, and Lucy, I trust, has made her very last journey upstairs, and fetched the last of the things she has forgotten, so you'd better set the column in motion, and *en route, vieux grognard*."

Off the cavalcade started, intense excitement prevailing among those it left behind: maids flitting, half hidden, among the fir-trees, making the most of the break in the stagnation of their kitchen life, dogs dashing themselves against the pales of their kennels in mad paroxysms of jealousy. Long after the sound of voices and ring of pony-hoofs had died in the distance, the despairing howls of the deserted ones made morning hideous. Turning up from the road by the side of the low grey bridge, the party began to mount by the banks of the leaping stream. More from habit than to pilot a path, the ponies would trust no one to find for them. McLachlan strode on in advance, like the tambour-major of a *corps* of French sappers, flourishing in his hand the black oak sapling with the snaky head. Up, with many a slight trip and stumble even of the sure-footed ponies, by heather and bog, by bog and heather; through the red moss, where the eagles who made their eyrie in the north cliffs of Ben-y-Gair, were hunting on the hover overhead; and then, in a supreme struggle, up the Giant's Staircase, where it would have been no bad thing

to have borrowed the eagles' wings. However, at last, the band of pleasure-bound pilgrims picked their way toilfully along the face of the last gigantic step, and, rising the ridge of the *Col* above, the leading files opened out on the little meadow, the object of the expedition.

"There they are before us, and, for as prosaic a set of individuals as one is likely to meet, don't they group picturesquely, Miss Winter?" exclaimed Hugh. Miss Winter did not answer immediately, and he turned to look at her. The girl sat fairly entranced in admiration, her eyes most eloquently expressive, if her lips were closed. There was a grand effect to one unused to mountain scenery in that bit of soft green lawn, shut in by those weather-shivered mountain-walls, that towered up to meet the clear blue sky above. A group of half-savage sheep, scared out of their favourite grazing ground, plunged to their curling horns among the rocks and the heather, stood ready for further flight at a second's notice, and gazed shyly down on the intruders. Some rugged shadows from the rocks, some specks of floating brown from the rare fleecy clouds fell over the turf, and then there were the figures that clustered round the spring, laughing and sparkling in the middle of them, a diamond of the desert. Lucy had bent forward in her saddle, unconsciously tightening her grasp on the bridle, stopping her pony and the whole cavalcade as she contemplated the picture. No one but Hugh could see her face, but those she brought to a standstill behind her commented, of course, on her inaction.

"Fairy-stricken, Miss Winter?" shouted George, who was following her in exuberant spirits. "I should have thought those gross beings by the fountain were safe to have exorcised alike the spirits of earth and air."

Lucy started, and jerked vigorously at the bridle of her stiff-necked and hard-mouthed mount, who, having settled himself to cropping the grass with the true *carpe diem* promptitude of a mountain-bred beast, stolidly ignored the appeal. Hugh chivalrously came to the rescue, seized him by the head, and dragged him forcibly onward, paying himself, however, for his assistance by gazing admiringly in the rider's face. Colouring up in the consciousness of her display of sensibility, her face lighted with the glorious sun and the pleasure that had not faded out before the blushes, never had Hugh seen her look half so pretty.

"Pretty! no, that's a blasphemous absurdity," he corrected himself, in soliloquy; "lovely I mean to say. I wonder if I ever shall get to know anything of that girl. She seems so quiet, so unimpressible, sometimes so expressionless,—and see there! Magnificent, is it not, Miss Winter?" he whispered, changing his tone, gently caressing the rough mane of the pony, and, perhaps, incidentally the gloved hand of the rider. For himself, he had a profound sympathy with nature in her changing moods; but, from habit and the dread of misappreciation, he locked it back in his bosom. Generally, he would as soon have thought of putting his thoughts in words as of whispering his heart secrets, if he had any, in the board-room in Lothbury. But a display of congenial feeling was apt to turn the key before he was well aware of its being touched,

and, for the moment, he felt drawn to Lucy as he had never been before. And there was something in his tone that let her guess it. It pleased her to feel the distance that separated them shrink under the gentle influences of the moment; to see one of the barriers crumbling that her modest self-appreciation had raised; to know they had sympathies, and at least one secret in common.

"So grand and beautiful that it seems almost profanity breaking in on the solitude with this noisy picnic of ours. How foolish I am; but you won't betray me, Mr. Childersleigh, I'm sure," she added, appealingly.

"Betray you! not I, indeed, Miss Winter," and he threw more warmth, perhaps, than needful into the asseveration and the reassuring look that accompanied it. "It seems peaceful enough now, but you would tell a very different tale had you seen it, as I have, in an autumn storm."

"It is the idea of what it might be that impresses you, and awes you while you admire."

"Yes, it's savage nature in an enchanted calm. Beauty lulled to sleep in the arms of Terror. I suspect our advancing hampers are more welcome objects to those Philistines from Baragoil than Ben-y-Gair in all his glory," he added aloud, and in a very different key, while the rest of the party came crowding round them as they disengaged themselves from the defile and spread out over the green hollow.

Rushbrook came forward to welcome them, jödeling in the lightness of his heart. They might have been in the Forest cantons, treading by the hallowed fountains in the classic meadow of Grütli: McAlpine, his foot set down on his native hills, in philabeg and martin-cat sporran, although the former was of grey home-spun, and not of the gorgeous tartans woven by Clan Alpine's matrons; Barrington, in voluminous knickerbockers, looking ten years more juvenile than when we met him in M. Blanc's hospitable halls, a full year younger than at dinner the night before.

A jolly luncheon it was, and although all the men were *bons vivants* in their way—perhaps, if the truth were spoken, the ladies, too, according to their lights—not the least pleasant part was the preparations. Chablis, Leoville, and the domestic Bass cradled in the bed of the stream that rippled down from the fountain; Roederer and *Veuve* Cliequotsweltered in soaking swaddling bands in the hottest sun. Hard by crackled a fire by which the engineer and Lord Rushbrook officiated; one cherishing it tenderly, while the other offered to its warm kiss a plump young pair of grouse, artistically plucked and trussed and impaled on the screws of a couple of cleaning rods. The soldier had had his own experiences of camping out in Acadia. Near them, and sneering at their rude cookery, McAlpine superintended a pet portable *batterie de cuisine* of his own, in whose recesses various delicate comestibles were simmering. Even Sir Basil caught the spirit of the thing, and insisted on making himself generally troublesome, as scullion unattached. The snowy cloth was stretched on the velvet sward, the plates and forks securing it from the liberties of the faint breeze that was dallying with it.

"Pleasanter this than your al-fresco tiffins in the Wynaut, eh, McAlpine?" queried Barrington, in the intervals of a chicken *mayonnaise*.

"So far as company goes, certainly, and perhaps climate," returned McAlpine, who was paying his court to a snipe *salmi* he had *rechauffé* himself. "But I won't be so ungrateful as to abuse our jungle spreads. Ah, you ought to have seen them, Miss Winter; with your presence and Miss Childersleigh's they'd have been pretty nearly as perfect as mortal meal could be."

"It's distance lends enchantment to your view, I suspect, Mr. McAlpine," returned Lucy, laughing. "For my part, I fear the apprehension of being lunched upon myself might have quite spoiled my appetite. I should always have been looking over my shoulder for a man-eater dropping in on our party in an unfriendly way."

"Or a python, or a boa-constrictor, to say nothing of scorpions and centipedes, and all manner of humbler creeping things slipping in more unobtrusively," chimed in Maude.

"I told you I much preferred my company here; but after all, bar the tigers, and they were generally rather scarce for our tastes, there is very little to object to in the others you mention, is there, Captain Brown?" said McAlpine, turning to the engineer.

"I can't say, I'm sure. I've never enjoyed an Indian lunch, and I'm sorry for it now, as I much suspect, from your account, I should, if possible, have appreciated this one all the more. So far as my own quiet entomological experiences go, I can very well dispense with the North-American mosquitos."

"Ah, you don't know Highland midges, perhaps," said Rushbrook; "if we had only a few of them here they would rather disturb the Watteau-like repose of our little party."

"More like a scene from the *Decameron* than a group by Watteau," remarked Hugh. "Depend on it, Watteau's simpering shepherdesses and powdered prigs never made themselves half so agreeable."

"Yes, Hugh," agreed Maude, seriously, "the scenery is so thoroughly Tuscan in its softness; our retainers so strikingly Italian in character and costume!"

"You may laugh, Maude, but we've seen as wild backgrounds in the Apennines as these rocks of Ben-y-Gair; the Lady's Well might be a fountain in Vallombrosa, although it can very well spare the fallen leaves; and Italian grass was never half so green out of a picture. As for McLachlan and his satellites, imagine them Italians, in carnival time, masquerading as northern barbarians, and there you have it."

The desultory chat ran on till the pauses became more frequent, and a soft Italian languor seemed to have stolen on the party. No one was in haste to suggest a move. The gillies strewn carelessly about the turf, prone on their backs, and with their brown freckled hands clasped behind their heads, lay lazily smoking their short black clays, their dreamy eyes

languidly following the "reek" as it floated hither and thither in the air. The dogs were quartering moors in dreamland, setting phantom grouse with spasmodic grunts, or, to judge by their occasional fitful starts, breaking and running in where there was no fear of the dog-whip before their eyes. The sportsmen had, to all seeming, forgotten their sport; even the keen McAlpine, placid and taciturn, was lost in the meditative enjoyment of his second manilla.

"I thought you had an appointment with the ptarmigan, McAlpine, or what may be the meaning of all that battery of breechloaders?"

"Very true, Sir Basil, so we had; but gallantry before sport: the ptarmigan's convenience must wait on that of the ladies."

"Come, Mr. McAlpine, that really is too audacious," broke in Maude. "You have not only been silent yourself for this last quarter of an hour, but all the rest of us were gradually silencing ourselves in civil sympathy. Your drowsy influence has gained the keepers and the very dogs."

"My father's right, at any rate," said George, consulting his watch. "If we do intend to go to work on the ptarmigan at all, we ought to lose no time about it. What do you mean to do, yourself, sir?"

"I? Oh I shall be moving quietly homewards," returned Sir Basil; "and you young ladies, do you come with me?"

"Lucy has brought her block and her colours, I know," said Maude. "You mean to make a sketch of Ben-y-Gair, don't you, Lucy?"

"Only if there happened to be plenty of time, Maude."

"And there is plenty of time, if you feel sufficiently industrious. Seat yourself on the plaids there, and begin. You can't go wrong about the point of view. If the gentlemen can spare me McLachlan, I should like to climb the shoulder of Ben-y-Gair, and look down on the other side. You will have plenty of time, and I shall know where to find you when I come back."

"I think I'd better come with you, dear; I don't care the least in the world about caricaturing Ben-y-Gair."

"I assure you you can't make him uglier than he can look when he likes. No, Lucy, either you stay and make your sketch, or I don't go."

So Sir Basil and his pony, and the gillie who attached himself to the pair, picked their deliberate way downwards toward the lodge. Lucy seated herself and got out her sketching things; while, "setting the stout heart to the stae brae," the rest of the party braced themselves to the steep sides of Ben-y-Gair.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAST AWAY IN THE CLOUDS.

"WELL, McLachlan, and what do you say to the weather now?" demanded Maude, triumphantly, of the keeper, as she steadied herself, and was dragged upwards by the hand twisted in the strap that crossed his

shoulder. Resolved not to be a drag upon them, with a manner that would take no denial, she had refused all tenders of company, comfort, and assistance from the gentlemen.

"Deed then, Miss Maude, and I like the look of it less than before. Only see to they clouds rolling round by the sides of Alt-na-car."

"I see them, but depend on it they've no idea whatever of coming our way, and nothing can be clearer than Ben-y-Gair. He's put off his night-cap at last."

"And I'm not that sure, but I'd rather he'd kept it on. If the wind was to shift a bit, another half-hour and you mightn't be able to see your hand before you for the mist. Anyhow I'll not let you out of my sight, Miss Maude," said McLachlan, firmly.

"I'm quite sure I don't intend to lose sight and hold of you, so long as the walking's as rough as this. Not that I'm the least afraid of being cast away in the clouds."

Truly the walking had grown rough enough. The bare turf, with its broken patches of stunted heather, was fast giving way to what looked very like the scattered *débris* of a stone-quarry sprinkled with slates. First the bleached pebbles came singly, and then by handfuls; later you trod over whole battalions of them, through which there shimmered in places a thin brown glimmer of sickly vegetation.

The guns had taken a line of their own, turning away in the opposite direction. With a gillie or two interposed between each, and right shoulders slightly inclined forward, the line stepped out round the rugged shoulder of the mountain. But bright as was the sun and warm the stones they basked on, the birds were wild. Could they have come to the same conclusion as McLachlan, and foreseen some impending change in the weather? Even before the sharp mountain eye could detach the mottled grey plumage from the moss-stained granite, the flock had risen on the wing, circling high above the valley depths like a flight of rock-pigeons, only to light again far ahead on the heights they had been flushed from. In the well-founded hope of tiring them down, the party picked their way patiently onwards, snapping off the breechloaders from time to time at impossible ranges for the sake of doing something, and in the hope of scaring the quarry into sitting. The luncheon, with its premature conviviality, was but indifferent training for men who were labouring hard, unsustained even by the excitement of fortunate sport. So Rushbrook, always rather an indolent man, began to think.

"I tell you what, Childersleigh, you can spare a gun; in fact it seems to me we are a trifle crowded here, and if you don't mind I shall fall out of the ranks and saunter back after your sister and McLachlan. To my mind, and at the best of times, as I told you last night, ptarmigan shooting is the meanest of sports, as the Yankees say. Most unholy walking on the chance of a pot shot or two when you have tired and frightened your birds."

"There's nothing so demoralizing as desertion, Rushbrook. Already Barrington there is trailing his gun as if he had more than enough of it.

But, however, if you have the bad taste to wish to go, and to cut the sport for the scenery, do just as you please. It's liberty hill."

So Rushbrook did fall out, and strolled back, retracing his steps, till, in a fold in the ground, he caught sight of Miss Childersleigh's fluttering garments and McLachlan's bulky figure.

"Why, Lord Rushbrook, you here! When I first caught a glimpse of a human shape in the solitude, I took it for the gnome of the mountain. To what are we indebted for this most unlooked-for pleasure?"

"Chiefly, of course, to the attractions of your small but very pleasant little party, Miss Childersleigh. Partly, to be very candid, to the disagreeables of a wild ptarmigan chase over the roughest of ground after the longest of lunches."

"If you attach yourself to us, you'll find your sorrows are only beginning. McLachlan asseverates from that hill before us you can see the Atlantic, and so I mean to see it."

"On a very clear day I said, Miss; such a day as you wouldn't have, perhaps, six times in a summer."

"And what do you call this, then? In the direction we are going there's not a suspicion of mist, not one fleck of cloud against the sky."

McLachlan shook his head and muttered something inaudibly, but more, as it seemed, to hedge his credit as a prophet, than for any more immediate reason. Upwards they zigzagged, picking their toilsome way in comparative silence. Conversation is apt to flag when you become miserly chary of each breath you draw, when you are losing yourself in painful calculations as to the number of yet more painful steps that divide you from the Pisgah you pant for.

McLachlan, whose case-hardened lungs were working as pleasantly as if he had been lounging on the gravel before Killoden Lodge, and who was utterly uninfluenced by grovelling considerations like these, respectfully hazarded a question:

"Beg pardon, my lord, but were the dogs behaving pretty steady when your lordship left? It's not nice work for them at all, with they shy beasts of ptarmigan."

"Steady—enough—considering—young dogs—wild," puffed his lordship.

"Sure, my lord, they would be keeping the young ones in the couples. I laid my commands upon Hamish never to be letting them go when I wasn't there."

"Hamish disobeyed then: at least, all the six were ranging when I left," returned Lord Rushbrook, making the conversation into which he had been drawn an excuse for pausing in the ascent. McLachlan said nothing, but was obviously miserably ill at ease. He walked as one distraught, and when his companions addressed him, answered far wide of the mark. At last Rushbrook took compassion on his evident anxiety. Had his lordship been more of a lady's-man, he might have been suspected of manœuvring for a tête-à-tête with Miss Childersleigh.

"I tell you what it is, keeper; your mind is travelling wide after these puppies of yours. Why don't you follow it with your body? Perhaps Miss Childersleigh won't mind trusting herself to me for the time being, and when you come back you know where to look for us."

McLachlan hesitated, torn evidently in opposite directions, cast a long look up at the heavens; from where he stood saw nothing whatever to warrant uneasiness, growled in his beard a deep malediction against the offending Hamish, and hesitated again. But Maude, pityingly insisted on his going off on leave, and finally, with many parting cautions as to the most practicable line to follow, McLachlan darted away on the track of the now distant guns.

Maude and her new escort got on together very pleasantly in every way; enjoying the scramble, and seeing no reason whatever for taking it otherwise than easily; stopping continually to take breath, or, as they euphemised it, to admire the beauties of the landscape. Well worth admiring it was. The eye ranging away over many a valley absolutely desolate of human life, or with its solitude broken only by some isolated shieling; over sanctuaries of the red deer, where silver threads wound themselves round the base of purple mountains; over summit on summit, and ridge on ridge, to the faint yellow haze that marked the corn-land of the distant lowlands.

Ambition grows by what it feeds on, and the ambitioned shoulder scaled, Miss Childersleigh set her affections on another and a higher one. It would be turning their backs on the shooting party, but with the shooting party they had no concern. It would be throwing over their assignation with McLachlan, but from the point where he hoped to find them, he could see their figures in the distance. Maude urged that she was an excellent walker, and Rushbrook, who had no desire whatever to baulk her, suggested that when the keeper rejoined them, he could easily be sent down for her pony.

They descended into a hollow that looked as if a mammoth cairn had been upset in it by the frolicsome powers of the air; or as if some Highland Morgante Maggiore and his fellows had been in the habit of raining down rocks and boulders on it from the heights above. Picking her way where torn boots and gloves that split in the clutches she made at the air in frantic attempts to balance herself seemed ominous of falls and sprained ankles, Miss Childersleigh was naturally constrained to put her companion's outstretched hand in constant requisition. Their progress was at best a good deal of the halt leading the lame, and the slanting sun beating down on the glowing pavement, made their work the harder. "What a blessed breeze," panted Maude, turning her flushed cheek to the puff of dampish air that fanned it of a sudden.

"One would say it came from the earth instead of the heavens," returned Rushbrook, looking up at a light cloud or two that clung motionless to the sky. "And wherever it came from, it's gone as it came," he added.

"Surely that can't be fog," said Maude, doubtfully, looking at what seemed a slight thickening of the air, through which the objects a moment before so preternaturally bright seemed perhaps a trifle less clear.

"I don't know, Miss Childersleigh; it does look unpleasantly like it: I hope we shan't find our view spoiled after all our trouble. And at least, there's no mistake about that," he went on, a moment after, pointing to an unmistakable wreath of vapour winding itself swiftly round the brow of the mountain.

"McLachlan was talking this morning of Ben-y-Gair in his nightcap. It almost looks, does it not, as if he was tying a handkerchief round his neck in preparation for a damp evening?"

"A very dingy one, then; although by its appearance it must have been wrung through water. Perhaps he does his washing in his moss-pots, which would account for the colour. But seriously, Miss Childersleigh, it does look like a hint to turn—as if a change were brewing in the weather."

"I confess my heart misgives me; I don't feel at all inclined to go on on the bare chance of what we may see. As discretion is the best part of valour, suppose we keep our own secret and go quietly back."

As they turned, not a speck of mist, not the faintest haze was visible before them; nothing between them and the blue sky, so far as their horizon stretched, but those few light summer clouds. Still the sun beat warmly on their shoulders.

"Upon my word, Lord Rushbrook, after all it does seem like arrant cowardice giving it up, does it not? That fog can't mean anything; I believe if we went on we should have a magnificent view after all."

"Look there, Miss Childersleigh!" He had stopped and turned again. The light veil of fog they had seen had thickened into a dense curtain screening off everything behind it in palpable darkness. It was travelling forward swiftly, as a good runner might cover the level ground; and although the sun was bright as before, it was the mockery of a parting smile before an impending eclipse. The cloud-curtain touched his disc, changing his mellow gold to lurid red; the next moment and he was extinguished in the dripping folds, and glorious day had given place to a weird and fleeting twilight. The stones grew to boulders, the boulders to rocks, changing as by magic to dolmen and menhirs and putting on even stranger and more fantastic forms. Had it not been for his action, the mountain-hare that went skipping by them to his home in the cairn above, might have been taken for a sheep or a roe-deer.

A few seconds more and they were in the depth of the brooding darkness, literally a darkness that might be felt, for it was the blackness of concentrated vapour, and even before it had well swallowed them they were damp as from a shower of spray.

"An unpleasantly sudden change to come over the spirits of our sunny day-dreams, Miss Childersleigh," said Rushbrook, assuming a cheeriness he was far from feeling. He would have given not a little the fog had caught them some few hundred feet lower down.

"Do let us get on," was all Maude said in reply, quickening her steps, and looking and feeling most thoroughly frightened.

"Don't hurry, Miss Childersleigh, you'll only tire yourself out; before we meet your pony we may have to walk a little farther than we intended," rejoined Rushbrook in a quiet matter-of-fact voice, ignoring Maude's evident alarm. "All we have to do is to keep towards the left and downwards. It's slow work picking our steps where we can barely see our feet, but we cannot very well go wrong."

"Can't go wrong!" If Rushbrook gave faith himself to what he said so sanguinely, he knew little indeed of mountain fogs. More likely it was a pious falsehood told to cheer his frightened companion. Let any one shut his eyes and attempt to walk a straight line on the most familiar ground and see what his success will be. Try it when you have to thread your way through a maze of stumbling-blocks over broken ground, and you may picture the bewilderment in which a few minutes of doubtful progress landed the castaways. The hill sides were too uneven to make their inclination even vaguely reliable as a guide. If the light air had kept breathing steadily from the quarter whence it came at first, it might have been clue enough to lead them out of their difficulties; but it puffed and lulled and changed, and at last, when Rushbrook held up his damp finger, chilled it on all sides most impartially. No wonder. The moment a breath of air was caught out stirring in Ben-y-Gair it became the plaything of a score of fantastic shaped corries, who twisted and buffeted it till, losing its head altogether, it blew not as it listed itself, but as its capricious tormentors willed.

"McLachlan must be somewhere near us by this time, and he knows the lie of this pleasant country of his better than we do. I'll give him a call." And Rushbrook recommenced his jodels. But somehow the heavy air seemed to stifle the sounds as they issued from his throat. The very echoes, noisy as they generally were, growled hoarsely as if they had caught cold and found difficulty in articulating; even when he fired off his gun they gave half-hearted response to the deadened sound.

In the darkness and the depressing atmosphere, with the wearying work that seemed only to plunge them deeper in trouble and peril, Maude felt her sinking heart reacting on her failing limbs. Not yet would she admit the idea of an actual danger; but the shadow of it was blighting and threatened to paralyse her. Like the worn traveller caught in an Alpine snowstorm, she felt disposed to sink down where she was and wait in bodily peace, on the chance of safety coming to her. Rushbrook guessed rather than saw the state to which his companion was tending. He was as selfish as the rest of us—more selfish, perhaps, than many—and in the invariable habit of surveying situations from a purely personal point of view. It surprised him now how lightly his thoughts rested on his own share in the disagreeable adventure. He recognized Maude as an incumbrance, of course; for, left to himself, his strength must sooner or later have carried him out of the clouds back into the world. Of course, in no

extremity could he have conceived himself abandoning the girl fate had cast on his hands ; but he might have been expected to comfort himself with inward murmurs in the discharge of a difficult and dangerous duty.

In the danger, her strength was, in some degree, the measure of his. They might have to pass the night on the hill, and if the weather changed for the worse, it might well be one of them would never wake in the morning. "A sweet pair of babes in the wood we should make," he thought grimly. They would be sought, indeed ; but how long might it be before the search began, and their friends made up their minds they were lost. They had wandered far from the place where they had separated from McLachlan, it was even a chance if the seekers ever found that starting-point for their quest.

As it was, Rushbrook felt something of actual pleasure in the charge that had devolved on him—selfishness, perhaps, in another form. In the earnest yet cheerful voice that came out of the greyiness, from the pair of hands that, with brotherly importunity, pressed on Miss Childersleigh the shooting-coat he had stripped from his own shoulders, his most intimate friends would have been least likely to guess at the self-indulgent Rushbrook, who made a mock of most things in life, and would have made it his pride to disappear with a jest down the very jaws of death.

"No, indeed, Miss Childersleigh, I insist upon it ; so you had better give in with a good grace. Remember, I am answerable for you to Sir Basil, and I can't bring my charge home only to hand her over to the doctor." Maude resisted hard, but was fain to yield. He could feel her shiver as he helped her to pass her arms through the sleeves.

"By good luck, I have my flask with me, and the next thing is to prescribe you a few drops of mountain-dew,—hairs of the dog that is worrying us, Miss Childersleigh."

There, too, Maude docilely yielded. She felt she must rouse herself and make a struggle, and do all that in her lay towards their common extrication. Indeed, when the first shock of being swallowed in the darkness had passed, her faculties began rapidly to rally, and her bodily strength to return with her natural courage.

"Thank you, Lord Rushbrook. I feel greatly better, and much ashamed of my passing weakness. Believe me, you may count on me so long as my strength holds out."

"That's right ; and, by good fortune, we seem at last to be fairly on the slope of the hill. Once out of the thickest of all this, we shall be able to see our way a little."

They went on in silence, silence broken only by an occasional word of encouragement from Rushbrook, or by a shout, raised on the chance of its being carried to human ears. Maude scarcely wanted cheering now. She had renewed her powers, and it was just as well. After all, hope had been deferred, and the downward slope had ended in a sheer precipice, that made their way no thoroughfare. Had it not providentially lightened slightly for a moment, they might have stepped into empty air, and touched

the ground again a hundred feet below. All at once, a welcome sound broke upon Rushbrook's ear.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "at last. I hope I hear the guide that is to lead us home to Killoden."

"Why, what? You don't hear any one coming?"

"No, no, Miss Childersleigh. I'm very sorry if I raised false hopes; but I hear running water, and that, I trust, may answer our purpose nearly as well. Where it goes, we can surely follow, and, moreover, we must be lower down the mountain than I hoped."

"The precipices!"

"Most likely the stream has found a way where there are none to speak of. It's been working for centuries at smoothing them away," returned Rushbrook, hopefully. "I hope we may find a safe staircase, if a rough one. I shall go first and pilot you, and, in any case, if we have to leave the bed of the stream, we shall not lose sight of it. Here we are; and there seems, luckily, to be very little water."

It was a rough flight of steps, indeed, and a very damp one. Rushbrook had often trodden water-paths of the sort after the deer, but it had been in broad daylight; with mountaineers who relieved him of his very rifle, and on whom he was the drag and incumbrance. Yet these former stalking experiences stood him in good stead, and, although now he plunged to mid-thigh in a pool, now had to lower himself by the hands with water pouring fast into his shirt-sleeves, and feet tentatively searching in the air for a foothold, yet he managed to pioneer a practicable way for Maude. And all the time he did his utmost to keep up her spirits, laughing lightly at his own mishaps and miseries.

"Splash again. Certainly the kilt is the costume nature meant for the country. What would I not have given in the Sinai desert for water-bags as well filled and as cool as these knickerbockers of mine. It's more in the way of an otter than a Christian young lady, this romantic path of ours; but never mind, the longest road must come to an end at last, and how you will enjoy Killoden after it all. Ah—h!"

The closing ejaculation was caused by a drop into the mist very much deeper than he had counted on. He lighted on a loose stone, staggered, lost his balance, and rolled fairly over in the water, his gun-barrels ringing piteously on the pitiless rock.

"Don't be alarmed," he spluttered out through the mouthfuls of water he had involuntarily swallowed, as he struggled to his feet again. "It is nothing—nothing at all; much worse for my poor Westley Richards than for me. But take care, Miss Childersleigh, how you follow. Wait a moment."

It was with much difficulty Maude lowered herself down into his arms, but at last she did stand beside him knee deep in the pool, and this time thoroughly drenched. He began to be seriously alarmed for her. A long night's exposure in that condition might easily be fatal to a girl delicately reared. But he let nothing of it all appear in his voice; the darkness hid

his features, and he set forward and downward again, supporting her, as before, under the arm. There seemed nothing for it but to keep moving till they dropped. After its eight feet leap, the water ran more level for a time, and it was comparatively easy walking in its shallow bed. Yet Maude felt her companion totter, and now and again the hand supporting her arm involuntarily tightened on it. "Can his strength be going before my own?" she thought, and at the thought despondency began to gain on her again, and she felt her own forces threatening to ebb in sympathy. At last, after a violent stumble, Rushbrook let go his hold upon her and sank down upon the bank.

"Good heaven, Lord Rushbrook, what is the matter? Are you ill? For heaven's sake speak to me!"

There was no answer, and, terribly alarmed, she bent down to him. His eyes were closed, his face was colourless, and he had fallen limp and senseless across a stone. Her first thought was of death, and, in the horror and loneliness of the moment, a cold hand seemed to be clutching at her own heart, stilling its feverish beats. Then they went on again wildly, keeping pace and time with the fierce throbbings of her burning temples. Then reason found time to whisper it could be nothing but a swoon. She felt the two parts were changed, that she had become the stronger, and in that consciousness she acted with resolution and promptitude.

She tore open his collar and threw handfuls of the cold water in his face, although, heaven knows, all about him was wet and cold enough already. Then she rubbed his lips and temples with spirits, and finally forcing the flask between his teeth, let some of the contents flow into his throat. The eyelids trembled and lifted, then came a few incoherent words, he sat up and looked wildly about him. A minute or two more, and he was restored to full consciousness. "You feel better now, do you not?"

"Better, yes, Miss Childersleigh, thanks to you." And he tried to raise himself, only to fall back again.

"Indeed you had much better keep quiet; you see you are still very weak."

"Worse than weak, Miss Childersleigh, I greatly fear. I'm grieved to have startled you so terribly, but I did all for the best. I fancy I must have sprained my ankle badly in that fall. I would fain have kept it from you, but nature was too strong for me."

"And you walked on in your agony, never saying a word?"

"Not agony, only pain; and I thought it might have gone off, or I could have held out against it. I see I can't, and very sorry I am for your sake. Luckily we must have made a good bit of way towards the lower ground. Once on the heather and it's pretty nearly plain walking downhill, if you only persevere and take care of the bogs. Perhaps you'd better have my gun,—it's heavy, but it may help you so long as you keep to the stream, then you can throw it away—and my flask. God bless you, Miss Childersleigh, lose no time. You're drenched already, and it must be growing late. Only keep up a good heart, and good-by."

"You don't fancy for one moment I could desert you here?"

"I am certain you will, were it only for my sake. The very best thing you can do for me is to send me help."

"If I thought I could ever find it, heaven knows how gladly I would try. But no, if I left you once, I could never guide them back to where you are. Besides, my limbs would fail me, to a certainty, and I should only drop lower down. If we are to perish, better perish here. If a chance is left us, it is not to wander farther from where they are most likely to seek us." She had seated herself beside him as she was speaking. Rushbrook looked anxiously and searchingly in her face. It was very pale, and the features had a drawn, worn look; she was thoroughly exhausted.

"I believe she is right," he muttered. "It is physically impossible she should do it. Well, Miss Childersleigh," he went on aloud, "perhaps it is safer you should stay. They must certainly be looking for us by this time, and it is quite possible you might be wandering away from help. Here we can keep up each other's spirits till it comes. We cannot hope for a pleasant night, and God knows I would have done much to spare you the discomfort; but it might be worse and wetter," he added, with another desperate effort to take the sunny view of things.

Under his directions Maude searched about for some place that might give them better shelter, and she was lucky enough to find, hard by, a hollow in the gravel bank worn out by the winter floods. With its pebbly floor, and roof, it was comparatively dry. Thither he dragged himself, and there they cowered down, in a vague, dismal expectancy, a limitless horizon of gloom stretching all around them.

Externals, moreover, were depressing enough had their prospects been very much brighter. Maude cowered in the warmest nook in the cold den, but the dank vapours clutched at their throats, crept to their hearts, insisted on being taken to their bosoms, and chilled their very marrow. The plash and monotonous murmur of the stream made liquid melancholy. Once a black shape floated like a spirit of evil almost into their very refuge, and jerked out of it only slightly taken aback, to perch and croak upon the opposite rock. It seemed the demon of the mist, embodied in the evil-omened raven, come to gloat over his intended victims. Rushbrook could feel his companion take a fresh access of shuddering.

Yet through it all, and in his very sharp bodily pain, he did his best to bear himself up and her as well; still he made light of his accident, and jested as naturally as he could about the cold-water cure and wet compresses. She appreciated his kindness and his courage, but they had anything but the effect he intended. If he thought it worth while to affect to be in spirits, things must be black indeed; not that she did not make a brave fight herself against the gaining horrors, and with a success that surprised herself. But they thickened round her in spite of her, as time dragged past with his leaden feet. How slow he went they could only guess, for Rushbrook's repeater had stopped in the water. What looked like hours must have been nearer minutes.

Rushbrook's sprain kept him wakeful enough, but he felt Miss Childersleigh begin to nod on his shoulder, and at last she sunk into a dead slumber. At first he was inclined to be thankful for her temporary unconsciousness. Then the idea struck him—he did not understand much of these things, but he remembered sleep in snow meant death—that the slumber might be fatal. Soaked and chilled as she was, it could hardly be anything but dangerous. He shook her, at first gently, then more violently; as he felt the difficulty of awaking her, he became more roughly unceremonious. When he did succeed at last, he insisted on her raising herself to step up and down the shred of gravel before their refuge, to stir the blood that began to stagnate in her veins.

She obeyed, although the effort was intensely painful to her. Of a sudden she ceased it; as Rushbrook was going to remonstrate she silently laid her hand on his mouth. He, too, set himself to listen.

It was too good to be real! They could hardly trust their senses, but it was—yes, this time there could be no mistake—the faint, distant bark of a dog!

"A bark! a dog!" exclaimed Maude. "Oh, Lord Rushbrook, if they should only find us!"

Lord Rushbrook in turn pressed his fingers on her lips and waited. The minutes passed—the sound came nearer and nearer.

"A bay and a hound, Miss Childersleigh; and if McAlpine's bloodhound, Tamerlane, was at Baragoil, I'd swear to the voice. In any case they're running our trail, and you're saved, saved!"

The hysterical earnestness with which he spoke, the nervous eagerness with which he grasped her hand, told how much more gravely alarmed he had been for them than he had suffered to appear. As for Maude, she was sobbing aloud in her violent revulsion of feeling. The bay came nearer and nearer.

"Tamerlane I believe it is, and Providence has sent him," said Rushbrook, affecting not to remark her agitation, and falling back on commonplace, as the safest specific against possible hysterics. "Had I known he was come home to Baragoil, I should have been much inclined to have waited quietly where the fog caught us. But McAlpine seldom uses a dog after deer, and a few days ago he lent him to one of his cousins. How he should be here to-day I can't for the life of me guess." Maude was beginning to compose herself; her breath came more regularly, and the first use she made of it was to raise her voice and shout to the coming rescue.

"You need not tire yourself more, Miss Childersleigh; indeed you need not, they cannot miss us now. But shout by all means if it does you good. Evidently they're following us down the stream. It's just as well there was so little water in it, or even Tamerlane might have been thrown out."

A few minutes more, and a mighty hound, with open jowl and glaring eyeballs, half-strangled in a leash, and plaided human figures dripping like so many water-kelpies, disengaged themselves from the mist. They proved

a party in charge of the Baragoil keeper, one of three that were out upon the hills. But before they came up Maude had found time, and breath, and calm enough, to thank Lord Rushbrook in an outburst of heartfelt gratitude for the charge he had taken of her life and comforts at the risk and sacrifice of his own. Nor, although he affected to laugh and make light of it, telling her simple shame, if nothing else, must have kept him from running away, did he seriously set himself to disillusion her or to divert the warm current of her feelings. He seemed ungenerously satisfied to leave her believing herself deep in his debt. Deep, yet clamorous was the compassion, melodiously guttural the Gaelic ejaculations over the pitiful condition of the lady and the English lord. A light-footed runner was despatched forthwith to bring up ponies to the nearest practicable point. The pair were tenderly extricated from the gully, for fatigue and fright had made Maude well nigh as helpless as Rushbrook. "King's chairs" were improvised for their transport from the Highlanders' sinewy arms, but, willing as it was, their conveyance was slow enough at best. In the joy, however, of finding themselves back in safety and human society once more, all lesser discomforts passed for absolute luxuries.

Panniers filled with dry wraps which they revelled in, and provisions, for which they cared much less, met them with the ponies, and, deliberate as their movements had been, they found the news of their recovery had not yet recalled the other search parties. Not a male remained to garrison the lodge, and poor old Sir Basil, in frantic anxiety, was out with the rest of them on the hill. He returned to find his lost daughter deposited safely in bed, so we cannot assist at the interview between the pair. All we know is, the emotion with which he thanked Lord Rushbrook affected even that ordinarily impassive individual. Perhaps his lordship had been shaken by the day's work and his accident. Although he had absolutely refused to imitate Maude's example and retire to rest at once, yet with slight demur he yielded to Sir Basil's imperiously proffered hospitality, and consented to await his tedious cure under that gentleman's roof. Already an express was hurrying, at the utmost speed of man and horse, in search of the nearest doctor, who lived at a distance of only thirty-five miles. To say nothing of Rushbrook's ankle, Sir Basil was naturally seriously alarmed as to the shock his daughter's constitution might have received. His fears were happily relieved, and her constitution vindicated itself nobly; the young lady escaped for a couple of feverish nights, a heavy cold and a few days' confinement to her apartment. All the misery and mental anguish they had gone through notwithstanding, and very strange as it may appear, she and Rushbrook seemed to find morbid pleasure in going back on the incidents of that eventful day.

There were two men who could never bear to hear them alluded to. These were Sir Basil Childersleigh and his keeper. McLachlan could not forgive himself for having thrown over Miss Maude for the puppies, nor did he cease to regret that her rescue had been effected by other hands than his. He had scarcely joined the shooting-party when his experienced eye

read the sure signs of a coming fog. He imparted his gloomy forebodings to his *confrère* from Baragoil.

"You'll be getting to them before the mist yet if you be nimble," was that gentleman's reply; "but if you was to miss them, never you fash your thumb about it. Tamerlane came home to us this morning, and if we laid him on the scent to-morrow, he would run it from here to Conan Ferry."

McLachlan not only missed the objects of his quest, but, for the time being, lost himself. Then it was long before he and the Baragoil man groped their way to each other; but in the meantime Tamerlane had been thoughtfully sent for, on the chance of his services being wanted. As the old hound had an unpleasant instinct for rending the stranger he chased, McLachlan had reluctantly seen the leash that held him consigned to more familiar hands, while, to make assurance surer, he ranged the opposite side of the hill with another party. So it was to Tamerlane's unlooked-for return to his master's that Miss Childersleigh, in all probability, owed her life.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. HEMPRIGGE BREAKS HIS RULE AND MAKES A CONFIDENCE.

WHILE far away in the country of Ossian his chiefs were leading the lives of the heroes of the mythical bard—hunting the hart and the grouse among cloud and storm, through heather and over precipices; sunning themselves after the toils of the chase in the smiles of beauty—Mr. Hemprigge was quietly following up his own personal game with the sharpness of the terrier, the staunchness of purpose of the sleuthhound. Childersleigh's genius away, his subordinate's talent indicated itself; his technical information, his unwavering earnestness, asserted their supremacy over colleagues who, in their visits to the establishment, had been accustomed to place themselves in the hands and think with the brain of its head. Hemprigge held in his fingers all the complex threads of its manifold transactions. He came to the meetings of the Board so thoroughly "posted up" in its figures: he had so clearly thought out to its consequences each suggestion he had to make; so carefully weighed beforehand all that might be urged for and against, that there was no taking him at a disadvantage. Those who risked a friendly fall with him in the way of discussion generally had cause to regret it. Yet with it all he was modesty itself; no man could say he read in his eye, far less gathered from his speech, any indiscreet consciousness of triumph. He was guilty of no ostentatious deference; simply where he could he reached his fallen opponent an unobtrusive hand, and quietly passing on to the matter next in hand, stated his views upon that with the same calm assurance of faultless information and unassailable logic. Candour itself, he made no monopoly of the knowledge he possessed, but offered himself, as in duty bound, a practical encyclopædia of the affairs of the

Company—an encyclopædia with the rare merit of being always in harmony with itself, open it at what page you would. Some of the directors left on duty had been disposed to regard him distrustfully, as an able adventurer, an edge-tool dangerous in any hands but the Governor's; nor had that distrust been altogether allayed by the parting counsels of Mr. Childersleigh, when he started for his holiday. Now they began to doubt whether these vague warnings as to the propriety of a careful supervision could have had any reference to the Managing Director.

"I'll tell you what I like about Hemprigge," observed Marxby one afternoon to Schwartzchild, as they left a Board meeting in company; "with all his thorough knowledge of the business, he sticks so closely by the Chairman's ideas in all he does or says." Schwartzchild hesitated.

"For my part I'm not sure but what Hemprigge may very easily carry that too far. Childersleigh's clever, but remember after all he's only gathering his experience as he goes; and there's many a wrinkle he could pick up from men like you or me or Hemprigge, who, I must say, goes heart and soul about his work. I'd just as soon Hemprigge didn't follow Childersleigh so blindly. That other 50,000*l.* to-day to the Smyrna Waterworks, for instance—I could see Hemprigge was far from clear himself about the wisdom of locking-up more money there. I am sure I am not. But he wouldn't speak for himself, he spoke for Childersleigh, and the loan's approved."

"Well, now, I'd much sooner stand by Childersleigh's judgment in a matter of that sort, sharp as Hemprigge is; depend upon it the other has the longer head of the two. The Chairman doesn't let our money go where he can't lay his hands on it if needful; and so long as Hemprigge knocks under to him, I'll knock under to Hemprigge."

"Humph!" growled Mr. Schwartzchild dubiously, as he nodded to Marxby and turned off in the opposite direction. Talent is pretty sure to find its level, and virtue sometimes meets its reward, even in this life. With all his loyalty and his modesty, already and in spite of himself, Hemprigge was recruiting partisans at the Board; wresting golden opinions even from the devoted admirers of his leader.

Mr. Hemprigge's was an excellently regulated mind, and although it divided its allegiance between love and mammon, those conflicting powers were constrained to compromise their mutual hold upon it. Love had no chance with its sterner rival in business hours; *en revanche*, away from Lothbury, it reigned pretty absolutely the lord of all. The moment Mr. Hemprigge gave his thoughts the reins, they careered away like winged steeds to seek his heart in the highlands. It seemed strange the tender passion should take so fast a grip of such a man without making him utterly its slave at all seasons. Had he an iron power of self-control he could exert at will; or was he happily gifted with a dual nature? How was it the cool, clear-headed manager of the *Crédit Foncier* of Turkey, who held steadily as ever by the main chance, suffered as by enchantment sudden demoralization as he passed out at its

portals? The threshold passed, he dropped his business-like burden of financial cares, but only to exchange it for another and a heavier one, tied up with the fancies of a penniless girl.

So it was, however, and his leisure moments found him not only the slave of love, but the prey of jealousy. If it was bad enough to picture the object of his attachment removed farther than ever from himself, it was still worse to know her within the reach of others. Why should the fruit that all his disinterested hopes were centred in seem less tempting to those who had it ever before their eyes, who possibly had but to stretch out their hands to pluck and to enjoy? The thought "working in his brain," came as near to conventional madness as it might be expected to do with a man accustomed to govern himself by the conventionalities. His hat was a shade less nicely brushed, the broad colours of his costume scarcely so artistically adjusted, the flowers had faded and fallen from his button-hole; above all, he took to shunning the circles he had adorned, and betook himself to solitary dinners and meditations. It was easy to see when he knitted his brow and fixed his gaze that he was rather scheming for the future than deploring the present. The friend he most laid himself out to cultivate now-a-days was Purkiss Childersleigh, and the two worthies saw a good deal of each other. Hemprigge went to dine not unfrequently with Purkiss, who was keeping solitary house at "The Cedars," returning the hospitality from time to time either at his rooms or at the "Sandringham," a club recently started, whose voucher for exclusiveness was its exorbitant entry money and subscription.

One evening he closed a fit of musing with a long-drawn breath, a sigh of relief, and a look of decision. "By Jove, I'll do it!" he muttered; "it can't hurt my showing him part of my hand, and I don't doubt I may bring him to help me." And next morning Purkiss found a message from his friend waiting him at "Childersleighs," with an invitation to dinner for the evening. Purkiss accepted, and went, and rather repented having gone. His entertainer—marvellous thing for him—was absent and inattentive, often talking at random, sometimes barely answering at all. Purkiss was irritated and showed his irritation. After all, he condescended when he stooped to be entertained by Mr. Hemprigge, and he had no idea of being repaid by slight.

"Good evening, Mr. Hemprigge," he broke out abruptly, when for full three minutes his host had been sitting in elaborate abstraction and speaking silence. "Good evening, I see I keep you from graver business or pleasanter company."

A more shrewd observer than the banker might have detected something of histrionic effect in the start with which the usually collected Hemprigge roused himself, in the expansive energy with which he cast himself on the starched bosom of his friend.

"God bless me! Childersleigh, what ever have I been doing? I feel I owe you a thousand apologies; I must have been treating you most shamefully, and making a miserable return for your charity in giving me your

society. Well, well," he went on, with a melancholy smile and most taking candour, while his drooping eye rested in stealthy steadiness on Purkiss, "as you ought to know, there's no man whose friendship I value half so much as yours, and I can't let you leave me under a misconception. Moreover, it's no use whatever trying to deceive your perspicuity; it's lost labour throwing dust in those sharp eyes of yours. You must see that I'm put out, and if you'll only consent to sit down again and listen to me, I'll make a clean breast of it."

Purkiss smoothed his ruffled brow, and with a bend of the head, intended to be half stately, half encouraging, resumed his seat.

"Yes, you've seen, of course, there's something bothering me, and there's no man I would sooner come to for help than yourself—help in the way of advice, I mean," he added hastily, for at the ominous word Purkiss had shied instinctively, like a horse being led up to a scarecrow. "Yet I don't fancy, clever as you are, Childersleigh, you'd ever guess the causes of my trouble."

Purkiss rapidly ran over in his mind all the probable misfortunes, from simple insolvency to an indictment for perjury, he could imagine as threatening his accomplished friend, and he flushed over his ears and forehead as he devoutly wished himself well out of his rôle of confidant.

"No, you'll never guess, so I may as well speak out at once. It's a woman, that's what it is."

"A woman!" Purkiss ejaculated hesitatingly, as doubting if he heard aright, while relief, astonishment, contempt chased themselves successively over his expressive countenance. The observant Hemprigge saw he had lowered himself, with a word, full 50 per cent. in his companion's esteem; but he read, too, in the air of genial abandonment with which that gentleman composed himself to listen, that he might be counted on more confidently up to a certain point now that he had been disabused of the dread of any excessive strain on his friendship.

"Yes, I've gone and fallen over head and ears in love, Childersleigh; and the girl has nothing, or next to nothing."

Purkiss stared upon his *vis-à-vis* open-eyed. Like most dull men he had a nervous horror of mystification, and this seemed a mystification, only too gross and palpable. Hitherto he had entertained a profound respect for Hemprigge's business qualities, and it shocked all his principles, shook his faith in human nature and everything else to its roots, to think of a model man of business falling in love at all. For himself, he could just as soon have imagined himself guilty of dropping on his knees on the Lombard Street pavements at high noon. And with a girl without money! Why, this very clever fellow must be touched in the brain: and here he was in the management of the company in which Purkiss had invested largely. His features were eloquent of puzzled uneasiness. Hemprigge, apparently lost in contemplation of the ringed fingers that were beating the devil's tattoo on the mahogany, had never taken his eyes off him for a moment.

"It doesn't sound rational," he proceeded; "looks much more like insanity than anything else, does it not? But you must suspend your sound judgment, Mr. Childersleigh, till you hear all. Then, possibly, it may not appear to you altogether so foolish."

"I am listening, Mr. Hemprigge," returned Mr. Childersleigh with judicial solemnity. The last three minutes, and the rude shock the one had given the other's respect, had well nigh undone the slow work of months, and already replaced the two gentlemen on their earlier footing of distant ceremony.

"You see, Mr. Childersleigh, a man in your position—in your great position," he added, seeing Purkiss sniff pleasantly at the incense, "need only look to a single point in marrying, and that, I need hardly say, is money." Purkiss nodded assentingly and approvingly.

"With a self-made man there are other things to be thought of—things, I mean, of course, that shall turn to money in the long run. I am a speculator by temperament, I admit it frankly; perhaps you will excuse me if I say there may be less able or lucky men." Hemprigge saw it was high time to assert himself a little, for Purkiss, visibly swelling up with importance, was already beginning to accept the other's humility much too complacently.

After a slight pause he went on—"In my opinion there's no more short-sighted fallacy of the short-sighted old school than its absurd principle that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. A simple apology for dullness, rely on it. Take my own case. I could marry a woman to-morrow with 20,000*l.*—30,000*l.*—perhaps more, and what should I gain by it, pray? A net sum in cash and there an end, strictly tied up by settlement moreover. Why I can make the money for myself in a hand's turn, in two or three years at the outside. But if I marry for connection, trust me for changing the connection into position and credit, and I say it boldly, credit with me means pretty nearly unlimited means of helping myself and my friends as well." Thus reminded of his friend's money-making talents, Purkiss's manner inclined once more to the friendly and confidential.

"You took me aback at first, Hemprigge, I own; but after all there is sense in what you said, as indeed, I ought to have taken for granted. You could never dream of marrying for nothing—not such a fool. But may I venture to ask the lady's name?"

"I was just coming to that—Miss Winter."

"What! Lucy Winter, did you say?" Purkiss opened his eyes wider than ever. "And how or where in all the world do you look for either connection or credit there?"

"Come, come, Childersleigh, you don't affect not to see. Is she not a dependant of your family, the *protégée* and distant relative of Sir Basil Childersleigh—actually a member of his household? But let me tell you, if you don't know, that a connection like that may be made worth a very great deal to a man like me."

"Well, Hemprigge," returned Purkiss complacently, "doubtless you know best, and I suppose you understand your own business. If you overrate the value Miss Winter's position may be to you, that's your look-out. What I don't see, is why you should come to me for either help or advice in the matter. Your mind seems made up, and then, charming as Miss Winter may be, as you very justly remarked, she has not a shilling to bless herself with. You don't imagine she won't jump at an offer that settles her so comfortably for life."

"But that is just what I do imagine. Girls have their fancies. Your sister's friend may be excused for forgetting her own position."

"Perhaps my sister spoils her; I've often said she does; but although you are in love with her and I am not, yet I think better of her intelligence than you do. Depend upon it you've only to ask and to have," and Purkiss chuckled in his contented knowledge of the world.

"I wish I could think so, but I repeat that I don't."

"Surely you can't have been feeling your way already and failing," returned Purkiss, looking narrowly at him.

"No, no, nothing of that sort," rejoined Hemprigge hastily, and involuntarily dropping his eyes. "Only when a man's over eager about anything, he naturally gets anxious, I suppose, and I see difficulties."

"I don't. But you think I can do something for you, you say. Tell me how I may help you, and if I can I will."

"A thousand thanks, Childersleigh, for this new proof of your friendship! You give me fresh hope. I knew if I could get you on my side my cause would be half gained."

Mr. Childersleigh felt by no means so sanguine on that score as his friend. He did not overrate his influence in his family circle.

"With a fair field," Hemprigge proceeded slowly, "and thanks to your kind invitations to 'The Cedars,' I ought to win."

"A fair field! Why, who do you think is going to interfere with you? Do you mean my sister?"

"I did not allude to Miss Childersleigh just then, although I fear I scarcely stand so high in her good graces as I should wish to do."

"You don't fancy there are rivals in the case?" and Purkiss laughed unaffectedly. "Why, that would be the very insanity of jealousy, my good fellow, take my word for it."

Hemprigge said nothing.

"Oh, you have a rival then: for heaven's sake name him, and put me out of suspense, for I shall never guess. Perhaps it is my father, who prepares me a pleasant surprise in the shape of a mother-in-law. At least he is the only gentleman I know with a tender feeling for the lady whose opportunities are likely to make him dangerous."

Hemprigge did not seem altogether to appreciate the unwonted facetiousness of his friend, and answered gravely and rather sulkily,—

"There may be another, and one who knows how to improve his opportunities as well as most. What should you say to my worthy

chief? I for one don't undervalue Mr. Hugh Childersleigh's rivalry in love or anything else."

He had succeeded effectually in arresting Purkiss's attention now. That gentleman stared across at him in stupid amazement.

"Yes," Hemprigge went on deliberately, "I see I have surprised you, and I don't wonder at it. Mind, I don't say he means anything as yet; indeed I am quite certain he did not when I last saw them together. But I could see what he was blind to—that she was something less than indifferent to him—and who can tell me how things may be working round down there? He's the very man circumstances might tempt to a folly."

"Nonsense, Hemprigge; the last man in the world, I should say."

"Pardon me, Childersleigh, you don't know him. You have never had occasion to watch and study him as I have. He'll work and scheme, and scheme and work; then he is precisely the fellow to throw away everything for a woman and a fancy. What's that play—*All for Love*, or *the World Well Lost*. Worldly as he is, I can imagine Childersleigh the hero of a piece like that. I repeat I can figure circumstances that would make Miss Winter's position—she'd be as much of a drag on him as she would be a help to me—an irresistible temptation to him to defy and scandalize the world he seemed to live and labour for."

"Granting it to be possible, which I don't, you must know that nothing is more unlikely. You do Miss Winter injustice. I am sure she is far too shrewd to wait for miracles; she won't miss the shadow for the substance."

"You are so very sensible yourself, Childersleigh, you can't conceive other people doing foolish things. She has always had some romantic notion of what he did for her at the time old Miss Childersleigh died, and that confounded *grand seigneur* air of his is just the thing to fool a woman." To this Purkiss answered nothing. He sat abstracted, as Hemprigge had done earlier in the evening. These unexpected confidences had taken him aback and landed him in a dilemma. On the one hand there was nothing he would have liked better than to see Hugh compromise his brilliant reputation for sagacity and mar his great prospects by a foolish marriage, but with all the faith he felt in Hemprigge's perspicacity, the idea seemed at once too wild and pleasing ever to realize itself. On the other hand, if he could help Hemprigge to the lady, he should earn a gratitude which might show itself in many profitable ways: he should have the pleasure of paining Maude, who, however much she might dislike it, would scarcely take the responsibility of opposing herself to a match so eligible: and especially if there were any shadow of truth in Hemprigge's suspicions, the marriage could not fail to irritate Hugh intensely, although possibly at the cost of trouble between him and the Managing Director.—"However that's Hemprigge's own look-out," he thought; and then he added aloud,—

"Well, Hemprigge, whether or not you alarm yourself unnecessarily about Hugh, makes little difference to me. As I said, I am quite willing

to help you, if you only show me how. As it happens, I go down to Scotland in a day or two, so at any rate I can report how the land lies; and when my people return to town you must come often to 'The Cedars' and fight your own battle."

"The very thing I should have asked of you if I had dared. What I want is an opportunity to carry her before anything occurs to bring Childersleigh to know his own mind. Then I hope I may count on your influence with your father later if the young lady gives her assent."

"Certainly," mused Purkiss, absent again. "Look here, Hemprigge," he went on, after a pause, "I'll do something more for you if you like. Find an excuse and run down with me to Killoden. Arrange some urgent business for the benefit of my father and Hugh—tell the young lady what you please. Women like that sort of thing, they tell me; though, thank heaven, I don't pretend to know anything at all about it. Chivalrous and all that. Then strike while the iron's hot."

The pleasing hope of preparing a *mauvais coup* right and left, of doing an evil turn to his sister and kinsman, and arranging them a disagreeable surprise, was like an inspiration for Purkiss, wonderfully brightening his faculties.

"Eh—what? That would be a bold step indeed—too bold, I fear—and might give Childersleigh the alarm. He is so diabolically distrustful. Yet after all, he must know what I intend, sooner or later; and perhaps the sooner the better. He'll be the more unprepared. As for a pretext, I have a dozen excellent ones ready to my hand. He won't be deceived, I daresay; but I can't help that, we must risk something at every game."

Hemprigge had insensibly glided into an unfriendly tone in speaking of the absent chairman. It might be born of the thought of their possible rivalry; perhaps he felt it gave him his best hold on the sympathies of Purkiss.

"Yes, there are a good many matters that ought to be discussed quietly between us," he went on, gravely; "matters where my own judgment runs counter to what I suspect his to be, and much too complicated and delicate to be satisfactorily discussed by letter. You start, you say——"

"The evening of the day after to-morrow."

"As luck will have it, there's a meeting of the Board that very day, and a part of the proceedings shall be the arranging a satisfactory apology for my chief. Again a thousand thanks, Childersleigh; you shall not find me ungrateful. To Wednesday evening then, and at Euston Square."

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